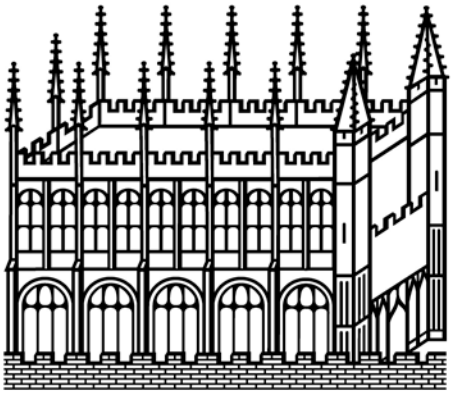

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THE DORP

STEPHEN BLACK

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THE DORP

NOTE.—In some cases phonetic spelling of Dutch words has been given to guide English readers in meaning or pronunciation. "Neh" is an example—in the Taal it is spelled "Nè." The "ch" is sounded as in Scots and German; nowadays it is written "g" in Afrikaans; but as this, the language of the Boers, is still in a state of flux, the older Dutch spelling, with which European readers are familiar, has largely been used, and English plurals. Glossaries are unpopular, and a middle course had to be found out of the difficulty.

THE DORP

BY

STEPHEN BLACK

"And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return."

Keats—"Ode on a Grecian Urn."

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THE DORP

CHAPTER I

ALMOST AN EPILOGUE

AS the pair of councillors crossed the main street to enter the Town Hall, two others, with pipes ablaze, passed out of the building, going towards the back *stoep*, ostensibly for a smoke before the meeting.

"*Dag*," growled Barend Oosthuisen to one of them.

But his friend Johannes Van Ryn, the Mayor of Unionstad, took no pains to pretend politeness; and not because he was the Mayor either.

With his head held high, he passed by, and when outside, purged himself with vigorous declamation and expectoration.

"Accursed Jingoes!" he said.

Oosthuisen excused himself for having given greeting. "You know Koos is married to my sister. After all, although he's on the wrong side . . ."

"*Ja*, I know," said Van Ryn in Dutch, "but when an Afrikander's turned khaki like that —King George and the Union Jack stuck all over him—he's not a brother-in-law, he's a *smeerlap*" (blackguard).

Then they conversed in low tones, pre-arranging some surprise with which to floor the South African

Party that morning. Their voices sank to a whisper softer than the sound of the burning saltpetre which crackled in the Boer pipes that they smoked ; the hum of bees mingled melodiously with their words ; and as the industrious insects passed in and out of a hole under the Town Clerk's office, the Mayor fixed one eye on the spot, and subconsciously estimated the amount of honey that would accrue when (as Chairman of the General Purposes Committee) he later on gave himself unofficial permission to empty the hive.

The other couple had now entered the Town Hall. There were Koenraad Du Plessis, P., Son., and Jacobus Ferreira, the ex-Mayor, a pair of councillors who prided themselves as being leaders of progress and enlightenment in Unionstad. " I wonder what game those two rebels are up to outside ? " muttered Jacobus. He took it for granted that, being Nationalists, Van Ryn and Oosthuisen must be plotting against the Empire and the Flag. Ferreira was always on the watch against this sort of thing.

" I'm surprised that you greet Oosthuisen after last night," said Du Plessis. " You noticed that *I* didn't ? "

" Well," replied Ferreira, " I believe in thrashing out such matters in the Council . . . besides, Oosthuisen is my brother-in-law."

" I don't gif er damn for such things, Koos ! Van Ryn is family of my wife's too . . . but he's a r-rebel, and I don't greet him ! " Du Plessis always gave a double trill to the " r " in rebel, and vehemently as he spoke marched into the Council Chamber, where the caretaker was laying out foolscap paper for the meeting.

The editor and proprietor of the *Unionstad News*, who

acted also as its solitary reporter, was already there ; a red-faced man, who, directly he opened his mouth—for either purpose—loudly proclaimed the fact that he was not an Afrikander.

" Good morning, O'Flinnigan ! "

Du Plessis was studiously amiable to the Celt, whose ready pen he knew could be wielded, either for or against him, with all the superficial skill, ardour and enthusiasm that surface emotionalism inspires, especially when directed by such things as a sense of importance, wounded vanity, alcohol, proximity, hot weather, domestic influence and paid advertisements. Apart from these varied elements, O'Flinnigan's point of view shifted daily—hourly—it certainly oscillated more rapidly than the solitary Unionstad weather-cock.

This bit of Europe, by a profound stroke of irony, adorned the " Editorial Offices " of the *Unionstad News*, whose Editor appeared to be sublimely unconscious of the jocular remarks which were bandied about when, after each issue of " the rag," the editorial opinion was seen to have changed yet once more.

There was little humour otherwise about the *Unionstad News*, so that in a way people were grateful to O'Flinnigan for keeping a record of changes in the wind and weather—about the only stable, unchangeable elements in this race-ridden dorp. Some people said that, as the Irish were so notoriously a witty race, O'Flinnigan knew all about the irony of the weather-cock and was laughing up his sleeve at them ; others declared the tin bird to be nothing but the traditional Irish bull, which in the end would give its perpetrator a reputation for the sharpest wit. But nobody dared ask O'Flinnigan to reveal the true significance of the

cock, for he was such a queer bird that one never knew how he would take anything—except whisky. He had even been known to refuse an advertisement because he disliked the advertiser's wife!

"Well, O'Flinnigan," said Du Plessis, "what about rebellion now, hey?—after last night can Oosthuisen go on being a member of this council?"

"He cannot," was the quick reply. "I'm arl for Irish Home Rule, as ye know, but this is a British Colony; a councillor can't keep his hat on when they play 'God save der King' in public."

"Shueeh."

"Phwat's der matter?" asked O'Flinnigan.

"*Pas op* . . . take care . . . he's a Nat . . ."

Without stopping to complete "Nationalist," the South African Party man looked significantly across at the caretaker, who was on the far side of the large room apparently dusting the mayoral chair.

This one-time *bywoner* did not appear to be listening, but "you never know these Nats" had become the watchword of that half of Unionstad which prided itself on being loyal to the Flag. How did they know that the chair-wiper was not an agent of the German Government?

Ferreira came in with a bundle of papers. When he saw Du Plessis talking *sotto voce* to the *Unionstad News*, he looked over with hopeful inquiry. Du Plessis confirmed the glance by one wink and two horizontal nods, which meant "O'Flinnigan's on our side; ask him to come out and have a drink."

Nothing would have suited the editorial book better, but at that very moment the Mayor and Oosthuisen entered the room, and O'Flinnigan—whose position in

Unionstad was admittedly a difficult one—had regretfully to decline the visit to the Masonic Hotel.

" If you please, *mijnheer*," said Van Ryn in his most formal manner, and highest Dutch. With Oosthuisen he pushed past the other pair, who in turn went " out on the *stoep*," not wishing to remain in the same room unofficially with any Nationalists. Nor did they want O'Flinnigan to feel that the Masonic Hotel had been projected entirely on his account.

It was the editorial pose that drinks had no influence whatever upon the policy of the *Unionstad News* (indeed, from a pose O'Flinnigan had grown to believe that this actually was so), and every decent person, from the Resident Magistrate downwards, took care not to divest the proprietor and editor of " the rag " of his last shred of self-respect.

When the South African Party men had closed the door behind them, Van Ryn turned to the caretaker and said in the vernacular :

" What was the Irishman saying to the ' Sappers ' ? "

O'Flinnigan's knowledge of the Afrikander Taal was more superficial even than his emotions ; but he cocked an ear at the sound of the scornful word " Sappers," which he knew to be a term of contempt applied by members of Hertzog's Party (the Nationalists) to all those of the Botha-Smuts element or " S.A.P." (South African Party).

In answer to the Mayor's question, the caretaker pointed to O'Flinnigan and said, " Ask him, *mijnheer*."

Van Ryn turned to O'Flinnigan.

" I suppose Du Plessis and Ferreira have been talking to you about what Oosthuisen did at the Town Hall Bioscope last night ? Well, . . . can you tell me why

an Afrikander in Unionstad, 6,000 miles away from England, should take off his hat and catch cold in the head because a Jew boy starts playing 'God save the King' on the piano?"

"I can't," said O'Flinnigan, as readily as he had answered the other side five minutes before.

Oosthuisen and Van Ryn smiled at each other.

O'Flinnigan dipped his hand into a pocketful of Boer tobacco, started filling his pipe, and proceeded:

"If I had me way the *News* would call outright for a republic. . . . I don't believe in arl this bunkum about Empire and Union Jacks and 'God save the King.' . . ."

Van Ryn and Oosthuisen said, "Hoor, hoor!"

"The trouble is, me readers," proceeded O'Flinnigan, "if I advocated for a republic our circulation would fall from 1,200 to 600 copies weekly."

Van Ryn (positively): "Don't you believe it—the Nationalists are in the majority."

"Majority of phwat?" retorted O'Flinnigan. "About two copies! Do ye tink I could bring out der paper on 602 copies a week . . . half o' dem on der free list?"

"We'll support you," said Oosthuisen bravely.

"Yes, as long as ye need the *News*," was the retort. "But once I'd plumped for yer party and the other side had withdrawn the advertisements, phwere should I be?"

"Yes, but . . ."

Oosthuisen's "but" served merely to inflame O'Flinnigan, who whenever he encountered or discovered one point of view immediately advanced another. His face became red as a boiled beetroot;

and his brogue thickened, while he demolished statements that had never been made, and arguments which poor Oosthuisen could never have imagined.

"Man, don't get so war-rm," interrupted Van Ryn. "The way you talk makes me think you are really a 'Sapper' too."

O'Flinnigan suddenly saw danger ahead.

If once the idea circulated that he was really S.A.P. at heart, his paper would be doomed. The Nationalists would withdraw support, not only in the shape of advertisements and subscriptions, but all printing jobs as well. These kept the small plant going between publishing days, for by itself "a rag" in any South African dorp O'Flinnigan knew to be a hopeless proposition.

The Mayor of Unionstad looked searchingly at the perturbed newspaper proprietor, and it seemed as though he was actually reading the rapid thoughts which passed through that alert and accommodating mind. O'Flinnigan was recalling earlier days, following his descent into dorp journalism, when first he edited "a rag." He was inexperienced then; and in a burst of Celtic fervour had taken sides, actually expressed a clear and definite opinion. It was upon the suitability of a certain Sanitary Inspector for some post; they favoured a Boer and he a Briton, or they a Briton and he a Boer—he'd forgotten which—anyhow, he had backed the wrong horse.

Never again! Now his rule was to unsay in the present issue anything definite that he might have said by oversight in the past one; and he made it a rule not to attack parties or communities . . . until it was quite certain he should never again need their patron-

age. He had, for example, fiercely assailed the last Magistrate—after the Government had shifted him to Doppersdorp; and his exposures of the Agricultural Society's finance—after every farmer in the district had already resigned—were historic. Then again, how neatly he had paid out the miserable crowd at Blaauwgrond, where his paper failed because of lack of support. Under a *nom de plume* he slung mud at that dorp to his heart's content from the columns of the *News*, but in fairness it must be said that he was ready to " go for " Unionstad in exactly the same way, if ever Fate decreed his return to Blaauwgrond.

Fortunately for his conscience O'Flinnigan believed every word he wrote. Shallow and ever-ready emotions directed his pen; emotions that, in turn, were directed by the wayward currents of a cruel and exacting society, whose slave he had become.

Cunning old Johannes Van Ryn read what was passing through that opportunist mind. He looked at O'Flinnigan with humorous, half-shut eyes, pretending to swallow the lame explanations urged in remission of those brief moments of excitement.

An awkward situation was ended by the entry of the Town Clerk, bearing the Minute Book and other official records. Behind him came various councillors, among them Ferreira and Du Plessis. A strained feeling of expectancy, almost a hush, was in the air—one felt that some profound sensation was on the *tapis*; that this meeting of the Unionstad Town Council would have an important bearing on the political future of South Africa, and not improbably modify or even alter the Constitution.

The Town Clerk, Paul Anderson, was a stout, healthy

man, who appeared on the best of terms with everybody. He filled a difficult position, which had the one great advantage, to a strong man, of supposititious neutrality.

Neither faction in the Council could appeal to his prejudices as he took an exalted view of his functions, and stoutly held out against being made a party to the aspirations of either side. For this reason he was secretly unpopular with both elements, and if either ever obtained a decided majority it was certain that a new Town Clerk would soon afterwards fill the post.

When the Council was seated, the Mayor cleared his throat, rose, bowed his head and with closed eyes offered up a prayer in resonant High Dutch, his words rolling sonorously through the rafters of the ancient building.

Well did Johannes Van Ryn know his audience!

Those members of the Council who were opposed to Nationalism, and all it represented in the way of language and ideals, objected in their hearts to this use of Dutch in the Council Chamber, but religion was up to now still the subject on which the Afrikanders of Unionstad best agreed, for at least they all worshipped the same God. And it pleased the Mayor to his soul that these meetings of the Council gave him the opportunity, as he expressed it, "of ramming the Dutch language down the throats" of those who disliked it. The loud "Amen" of the Progressive Party—as the "anti-Nats" styled themselves—was to Van Ryn sweet as the music of a heavenly choir; and he chuckled maliciously every time he thought over it.

Immediately the prayer was finished, the Town Clerk rose to read the minutes of the previous meeting.

But at that moment the side door opened, and a tall, vigorous-looking man, clean-shaven, although well past middle age, entered the Chamber. Calling out "Good morning" to the "Sappers" in English so idiomatic that one suspected a West-Country burr, Councillor Tom Oakley sat himself down in the remaining seat. He fraternized to some extent with the moderate Dutch, though he never felt quite at home save with people of his own race. Oakley was so insular that when first he arrived in the country he could not get used to the idea of Christmas being midsummer, or June mid-winter, nor of seeing the sheep shorn at the time that frosted cards were sent out to him from "Home." And the summer rains, with winter droughts too, seemed all wrong.

Of course he could not get out of the habit of referring to England as "Home." For though, after a few years, he had broken all family ties with the old country, it was always Home to him. He could not understand people thinking otherwise, and in a vague way suspected those who did, either of disloyalty or coloured blood.

"How's it you're always late for prayers, Mr. Oakley?" asked Ferreira jocularly.

"Perhaps I wait behind the door until they're over."

"To avoid hearing the Dutch language?" hazarded Oosthuisen, reckless of the consequences.

"Order!" shouted the "Sappers."

Oakley turned towards Oosthuisen with scorn written upon his face.

"Dutch language," he growled, "it's a patois that I won't listen to until you learn to sing 'God save the King'!"

The fat had not taken long to reach the fire. One side yelled "Order," the other bellowed "Shame." Oosthuisen above the din was at last heard shouting:

"Patois? It's a better language than 'God save the King' is music, anyhow!"

O'Flinnigan made rapid notes—he could use columns of this stuff without any responsibility for the sentiments uttered. Each side would see its abuse of the other in print, and each be happy and equally pleased.

The Mayor restored order by hammering on the table with an ink-pot. "Councillor Oakley," he said in impeccable Dutch, "is always too touchy. Councillor Oosthuisen's remark was inoffensive. Such scenes are deplorable, they lower the dignity of the Council."

"Please translate those remarks into English, Mr. Anderson!"

Oakley had been in Unionstad long enough to know Dutch well, and he understood perfectly, but he refused stubbornly to give the Taal any official entry to his comprehension. The Town Clerk duly translated. At the word "dignity" Oakley lay back and laughed outright.

"Order," said the Mayor.

"Order?" commented Oakley, with sarcasm; "they talk of the glorious Taal and it hasn't a word for 'order'!"

And again he loudly laughed, sublimely unconscious of the common Latin origin of the word.

"Councillor Oakley," began the Mayor warningly—then pacifically turning to Anderson he said, "Will the Town Clerk please read the minutes of the last meeting?"

Hesitating slightly, because of the storm he knew it

would inevitably evoke, Anderson began to read aloud in English:

"Minutes of a meeting of the Unionstad Town Council . . . held . . ."

At this point Oosthuisen, his voice vibrant with anger, rose to protest at the Town Clerk's use of English.

"Mijnheer Voorzitter . . ." he began.

"Mr. Mayor, you mean," corrected Oakley.

"Mijnheer Voorzitter," repeated Oosthuisen doggedly.

"There is no 'voorzitter' here," interrupted Oakley; "let's have the English of it!"

"Order!" shouted the Nationalists.

"Don't you 'order' me about," retorted Oakley.

"Councillor Oakley!"

"Councillor Oakley!!"

"Councillor Oakley!!!"

The Mayor's powerful voice drowned all others.

"If you interrupt again I will have to order you to leave the Council Chamber."

"Nothing to stop you from ordering . . . but who's going to make me go?"

"I hope it won't be necessary to go so far," answered Van Ryn gravely. He was every bit as determined as Oakley; and he knew his powers as Chairman. Soothed by Du Plessis and Ferreira, who bade him "wait a bit," Oakley allowed Oosthuisen to continue his remarks, which were to the effect that, in a Council with a majority of Dutch-speaking members, the Town Clerk should read the minutes in Dutch, not English.

"I will read the minutes in both languages," interposed Anderson.

"But why in English first?" asked the relentless Oosthuisen.

"Why in Dutch?" retorted Oakley, unable to keep still.

"Hoor, hoor," cried a "Sapper," forgetting which language he was advocating.

The Town Clerk next spoke. "So far as I am concerned, it makes no difference which language I read in. But last meeting I started in Dutch." He then continued in English.

Oosthuisen got up and moved to the door with the remark: "When I hear the Dutch language I will return."

Oakley could not resist this opportunity of retorting: "That's another reason why I never want to hear Dutch again!"

"Order," "Withdraw," and "Apologise" now sounded from all sides of the Council Chamber.

"Councillor Oakley," said the Mayor severely, "I must call on you to withdraw that remark."

"Why?" asked the interrupter.

"Because it's out of order."

"I don't see that," persisted the Englishman.

"If you don't withdraw that remark," was the retort, "you'll have to withdraw yourself from the meeting."

"Will I?" growled Oakley.

He and Van Ryn faced one another grimly, each equally determined. Oakley, as a former Mayor of the little town, knew that the chairman was in the right, but he would not, before all "these Nationalists," own that he was either in the wrong or afraid to face the consequences. Privately he used to respect Van Ryn;

and before the advent of these embittered racial days, not only had had business dealings with him, but friendly, social relations as well. But an apology to Oosthuisen, "the rebel," who had publicly refused to honour "God save the King"? Never! Gladstone might surrender to the Boers, but . . .

In a softer voice, almost persuasively, the Mayor was heard repeating his request for a withdrawal. It was evident that he wanted to make the pill as easy for Oakley to swallow as possible. But the obstinate man sat doggedly there without uttering another word; and Oosthuisen was waiting patiently for his pound of flesh. O'Flinnigan, too, in his heart wanted to see the sturdy old fellow publicly humiliated, if for no other reason than that he was English.

"Councillor Oakley, will you withdraw?"

At that final phrase the delinquent arose, banged his fist on the table and shouted, "I'm hanged if I will, and I'm damned if I'll sit any longer with rebels." And he strode out of the Council Chamber, leaving utter silence in it for the first time that day, so stupefied was the entire gathering at this climax to what had otherwise been a very ordinary scene in Unionstad Council of late.

The Mayor recovered his equilibrium first, and beckoned to the Town Clerk, who dashed through the minutes in English, and then in Dutch before any one had the time or inclination to interrupt again.

O'Flinnigan's disappointment at not having the humiliation of Oakley to record was compensated for by the splendour of the story; and he enjoyed immediate visions of the next issue's circulation rising to 1,300 copies. He could "write round" that one

vivid phrase until the solitary "comp," machine-minder, storeman, and clerk combined was laid out with fatigue. And how he'd stab that old fool Oakley in the headlines! He thought it all out as the Town Clerk was gabbling the minutes—no need to show his hand at all, not a word need be used to reveal his dislike of the ex-Mayor and all his race. "It takes an Irishman to shape English words as sharp as an adder's sting," he proudly thought; and the headlines formed themselves in his brain.

"The first business on the Agenda," said the Mayor, "is to consider an application (styled 'a petition') from 800 coloured people in the location who want the Council's permission to play cricket, football and lawn tennis—lawn tennis, if you please!—on the Town Lands. The General Purposes Committee advise against it."

"*Allemach,*" remarked a Councillor, "these niggers are getting more insolent every day."

"I move," said Du Plessis, "that permission be refused *nem. con.*"

"Hear, hear," cried Ferreira.

But Councillor Willem Achteruit, long-haired and sleepy-looking, angrily rose to his feet and said, "Mr. Mayor, why is Councillor Du Plessis talking about military matters again?"

"Mr. Mayor, I said nothing of a military nature."

"You did," shouted his opponent; "you talked about sending 'non-coms' to the Kafirs!"

Every one roared with laughter while the Town Clerk explained to the interrupter what *nemine contradicente* meant. The "Ou Baas" subsided and O'Flinnigan hastened to get down the incident.

"Will anybody second Councillor Du Plessis's motion?"

"Yes, I will," said Ferreira.

"Any amendments?" asked Van Ryn formally, before declaring it carried.

"Ja, Mijnheer Voorzitter," shouted Oosthuisen, "I object."

"What," said the Mayor, "do you want Kafir and Hottentot tennis courts in Unionstad?"

"No, absolutely no," declared Oosthuisen. "We have quite enough trouble already with Councillor Du Plessis's black allies. Already," he continued, despite opposition protests, "already there are twice as many niggers in Unionstad as white people. But I'm not voting for any pap 'Sapper' motions—I'll propose my own motion as follows: 'That the *applikatie* of the coloured people to use the Town Lands for sport be refused emphatically and unanimously, and that those words be substituted for *nem. con.*"

"But, Barend, it means the same thing," said the Mayor.

"Mr. Chairman," interrupted Ferreira, "I wish to point out that the word *applikatie* is not Dutch."

"Is it English?" retorted Oosthuisen.

"Certainly not."

"Then it must be Dutch," was the conclusion of the mover.

"More likely Kafir or Hottentot," was Ferreira's scornful observation, at which his brother-in-law glared fiercely across the table with a look which plainly said, "Wait until your wife gets hold of you." For Mrs. Ferreira, the late Mayoress, was, despite her marriage, as sturdy an anti-"Sapper" as her brother,

Councillor Oosthuisen. She had made her husband's term of office a problem instead of a pleasure, and anywhere but in South Africa he would long ago have agreed with this strong-minded wife.

"Barend," said the Mayor persuasively, "withdraw the amendment, hey?"

"*Volstrekt nie*" (absolutely no), cried Oosthuisen, determined to have no truck with the S.A.P. "Vote, Vote," he cried in Dutch, and from all round the room came the word "stem" in support.

Owing to the retirement of Oakley the Nationalists had a clear majority of one, without the Mayor's casting vote; and Du Plessis's motion was accordingly lost, Oosthuisen's being carried, not *nem. con.* as he desired.

"Next is an application for the use of the Town Hall on the 3rd next month, from the Advance Agent of Horace Hashem's Dramatic Co. The Hall is vacant . . . will one of the majority move in the ordinary way?"

Van Ryn tactfully said "one of the majority," as he feared permission might be refused if a "Sapper" moved it. Everybody in Unionstad loved dear old Horace Hashem; and the Mayor felt that, after the strenuous political life which they all lived by day, a hearty laugh over "East Lynne" at night would do them good. But no sooner had Oosthuisen moved that permission be granted, than Oom Kaspar Van Koeker, a "Sapper," who had not previously said a word, rose to protest.

"Mr. Chairman, what guarantees have we got that a wholesome and godly form of entertainment will be provided? Have we the right to risk corrupting

our children by allowing these licentious actors with their Reviews in our Town Hall? In this show, 'East Lynne,' a Minister of God is held up to ridicule . . ."

Here he was interrupted by the Mayor: "It's not a minister, it's a policeman and another villain."

"I saw this play in Johannesburg," persisted the Councillor. "It was a minister they made fun of . . . if he hadn't been Church of England I'd have walked out."

"That was 'The Private Secretary' we saw, Oom Kaspar," whispered Du Plessis. "It's a policeman in 'East Lynne.'"

"Well, hasn't a policeman got feelings and character too?"

"This one is a Nationalist policeman and they don't know it," said Du Plessis softly.

"Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my objection!" and Oom Kaspar suddenly sat down.

Just as they were formally putting the motion, Ferreira asked, "What guarantees have the Council that the rent will be paid?"

He was rather hoping to put a spoke in the wheel of his brother-in-law's motion, but the Town Clerk held up a cheque for five guineas, payment in advance; and Ferreira subsided into surly silence. Oom Kaspar again rose and wanted to include in the motion something to the effect that "Town Councillors have the right to enter the hall free of charge at any time to keep an eye . . ."

"On the girls?" suggested the Mayor mischievously.

"No, on the class of entertainment."

But Oom Kaspar's meanness was notorious, and his dodge to get a free seat was chaffed out of order, though at least two other Councillors as well would have liked admittance without payment.

With the passing of this motion it seemed that the worst was over, and that the meeting would close without further incident or dispute. But just as the "Sapper" watchwords were "Rule Britannia" and "You never know these Nats," so the Nationalists said "*Eendracht maakt macht*" (Union is strength) and "*'N Jingo's 'n schelm*" (a Jingo's a rascal).

What took place proved it.

O'Flinnigan was drowsily reflecting on the price of whisky, and just preparing to shut up his note-book, when the spark dropped into the powder.

"Gentlemen, I think that concludes the business on the agenda." The Mayor spoke in his most impressive High Dutch. He noticed Councillor Du Plessis, a distant relative by marriage, fidgetting about to speak. Now Van Ryn was an old stager, who had learned his practical politics in the Divisional Council, though the gifts which qualified him for it were innate, the genius of his race. And as soon as he saw Du Plessis moving about, he cleared his own throat to get in first. Before the "Sapper" could fire his big gun, Van Ryn said in a most dignified and mayoral manner: "One moment, Councillor Du Plessis. Before concluding the business of the meeting, I wish to draw the attention of members to the painful and regrettable incident of this morning, and to express the hope that no more scenes of that kind will discredit the Council Chamber." ("Hoor, hoor.") "There is no doubt that the bitterness in our midst

is largely due to the ill-advised manner in which certain members of one party will regard this municipal chamber as a place for politics, and will keep waving the flag in the faces of other people.

Du Plessis } "What party?"
Ferreira } "What flag?"
Oom Kaspar } "What faces?"

They shouted their interpellations almost together, but their rage at Van Ryn's cunning move did not in the least upset the latter's equanimity. Placidly he remarked, "If the cap fits, then wear it. . . . You see, gentlemen, they will not even permit the Chairman to open his mouth."

"You're talking politics," said Du Plessis.

Van Ryn: "I merely wish to remark that I shall allow no politics to be discussed here in future, and I look to all of you to assist me in upholding the dignity of the Council and my high office."

Amid loud "Hoor, hoors" he prepared to vacate the chair as a sign that the meeting was over. But Du Plessis, who wanted to bring forward a motion of censure on Oosthuisen for his "disloyalty in the Town Hall," jumped up, raging furiously. So beyond himself was he that, forgetful of his adherence to the Flag and the English language, he broke into torrential abuse in the Taal, his mother tongue. Nobody felt the oddity of this—in South Africa many people slide impartially from one language to the other, using six words of English to half a dozen of Dutch. Thus such phrases as "*Ek* is bitterly disappointed met die Mayor," kept issuing from Du Plessis's lips; and when O'Flinnigan afterwards declared that he "understood the High Dutch of the Council better than the

Taal in the streets," he was speaking the truth for once in his life.

The Mayor was a study in deportment during Du Plessis's speech. But when at length the "Sapper" stopped for lack of breath, and Ferreira pushed forward some paper on which to pen a motion of censure, Van Ryn sharply interposed, "I said I would allow no more politics here, and a minute later Councillor Du Plessis is at it again."

"This is not politics," screamed Ferreira. "This is loyalty!"

"Sit down," said the Mayor.

"I won't," yelled Ferreira and Du Plessis together.

"I move," continued the latter, "I move that the Council express disgust and shame at the conduct of Councillor Oosthuisen last night when 'God save the King' was played in the Municipal Hall."

"I second that," said Ferreira.

And another supporter excitedly cried, "I third it."

At once Oosthuisen, always ready for a racial fight, was on his feet, but so loudly did the "Sappers" assail him with "rebel," "traitor," "disloyal subject" and "German," that he could not utter a word.

At last a Nationalist was heard saying, "I move . . ."

"I move we all move," interrupted the Mayor, "I leave the chair."

And to the door he stalked. Heedless of the din, he passed out, with Oosthuisen close behind, and others excitedly following. One declared, "They'll get the Deputy Mayor to preside and carry the motion."

Van Ryn shed a large, benevolent smile over the swarming "Nats." "They can't do anything," he replied. "Oakley's gone away, and without him they haven't even got a quorum."

CHAPTER II

"Why should we push the world along, live in a world of flame ?
When the pace of the ox is steady and strong, and the end is
just the same ?" —*Cullen Gouldsbury.*

WITHIN half a mile of the Town Hall was the commercial centre of Unionstad, one long, flat building, whitewashed to a muddy yellow, with a large unbroken area of side wall, and a verandah, above which appeared the sign

ALGEMEENE HANDELAAR

The history of this General Dealer's store, the chief business establishment of the dorp, was noteworthy, for it crystallized the story of Unionstad, if indeed not that of the entire Union of South Africa.

It had been founded many years before by a roving South African, who soon after the Jameson Raid cleared off to the Gold Fields in search of something better, just as the store was beginning to pay. Oakley purchased it in 1897 at a fair price, for what it then was, and within two years had made profits enough to wipe off his original outlay. He was well liked by the Boers, who brought in their produce to sell, and then bought back the groceries, hardware, etc., produced in other countries, and imported by wholesale merchants at the coast for sale to *Algemeene Handelaars* who were in direct touch with the Boers.

Unfortunately all wars produce hypothetical winners and certain losers. After the first struggle with the

Boers in 1881, the British in South Africa sulked at the Dutch; and after the greater war of 1899–1902 the Boers sulked at the British. Oakley's store shared in all the beatific backwash of victory, and its proprietor was more than repaid by loss of business for those feelings of race-pride which he enjoyed at the apparent subjugation of the Boers. However, matters were slowly righting themselves, and by the time Union was brought about in 1910 the business had almost attained the apex of its earlier prosperity.

On the strength of Unionstad's future, O'Flinnigan came from Blaauwgrond, and started the *News;* the bank erected "handsome premises"; and Schlimowitz, a most astute Hebrew from Vogelstruisdorp, began operating in the district as a buyer of farm produce.

And then, when every one had piously and hopefully murmured, "*Eendracht maakt macht,*" and uttered panegyrics on the blessings of closer Union; when the Lion had lain down with the Springbok, and the British representatives of Cape Colony and Natal had been immortalized on a colossal canvas, side by side with the Boer statesmen of the Transvaal and Orange Free State; then only was the real rankle of war felt. Under the pact of Union equal rights were given to both races; and, after much debate, to both languages as well. Theoretically Dutch was as good as English in the Union of South Africa.

This "concession to the Boers" greatly angered Oakley. Like most of his race he was neither imitative nor musical of ear, and therefore a poor linguist. He despised all "foreign languages," considering them to be quite unnecessary, and it never occurred to him

that, before South Africa was British, Dutch must have been very essential to the pioneers from Holland who first settled the Cape and gradually penetrated inland to the Free State and Transvaal. Prior to the enjoyment of equal rights by the Afrikander Dutch language (or Taal) Oakley did not so much mind, for he regarded it as an amusing sort of speech, with which he trifled in the way that a fond parent prattles baby talk to his little ones. Oakley liked the Boers, and he learned in a few years to understand their simpler phrases, simplified beyond even Boer necessities for his benefit. But to regard Dutch as a real language, as a tongue fit to occupy the same place as English—why, the thing to him was absurd! Even his kind heart could not prevent the betrayal of an innate contempt for the Taal, nor from the exhibition of a certain superiority of attitude when brought into contact with "Dutchmen." Oakley often said "the *Taal* is a patois." One day he was foolishly arguing the point across the counter, and his remarks made him many enemies.

"It has no grammar," he declared. "I've always said so."

"But how do you know, Mr. Oakley?" asked one of the customers. "You don't speak it."

"I've seen it stated in the newspapers," retorted the indiscreet storekeeper, as though this settled the point for ever.

"In the *Unionstad News?*" slyly asked a Boer.

"No, not in that rag; O'Flinnigan is too big a cur to say anything against the Dutch."

Then he went on to argue that the Taal had no traditions, no literature and no declensions.

"No what?" asked Van Ryn, who at this moment entered.

"Declensions," stubbornly repeated Oakley.

"But, man, English hasn't got any declensions either."

"Hasn't it?" challenged Oakley. "Who says so?"

He was always ready to fight for the "Old Country," but very vague as to exactly what were declensions, for his father had truly prophesied that "Tom won't never be a scholard."

"Of course English hasn't any declensions, Dad." Annoyed at the whole incident, Ned Oakley, the son, emerged from behind the counter and asked Van Ryn what he could do for him? They walked to the end of the store together and Ned sold a three-legged pot, a claw hammer and a tin of paraffin oil.

"How's business?" asked Van Ryn.

"Oh, fair."

Ned glanced involuntarily towards his father's group, with a look that plainly said, "What can one expect with all this politics?"

Van Ryn made no comment, but he correctly interpreted the glance, and when he passed out of the shop was thinking deeply.

It was a hot day in 1912. Ned Oakley went into the room at the back and pored over the ledger. He entered up Van Ryn's purchases, and then on the pretext of necessity drew his father from the still arguing group of embryo politicians. The head of the firm had to be handled carefully; once engaged in a dispute of this kind he could only be coaxed away, like a bull-dog from a fight. Ned was broader in his views and possessed an intelligence keener than his

father's. Born and brought up in South Africa, he spoke Dutch fluently, and was able to understand the Boer point of view, almost to the point of sympathizing with it. Pride of race kept him English; it was a sentiment stronger than his reason, which inclined to the view-point of the country.

In appearance the young man was quite English—neither sallow nor brown enough for one whose ancestors had inhabited South Africa; fair and frank in looks, more reserved than the average Afrikander, and shyer, as well as more self-reliant. He was a good-looking fellow, too—tall, strong and bony, with a nice manly voice and straight back, virile in every sense. To English ears his accent was a decidedly Colonial one; he spoke from the lips with half-shut mouth, more than from the open throat, and ended his phrases on a rising inflection distinct from the English tendency to fall. In other words, Ned Oakley was a prize specimen of the first generation usually produced by healthy English parents in South Africa. He was rounded off by the possession of a good business sense, the genius of his race, as the political sense is that of the Dutch.

Ned's father lacked the sane discretion that might have resulted had his parents immigrated earlier. He was too condescending to convert the Dutch, and too obstinate to be converted by them. But if Oakley had the defects of his race he had also its qualities—a brave and honest heart, strict fairness in commerce, and pride to the point of heroism. He saw trade slipping from him because of his uncompromising attitude on the eternal questions of race and language, but he would do nothing to woo the Boers or their

business. In his dogged way he went along resolutely facing eventual bankruptcy.

"Narrow-minded lot of brutes," he said on entering the office.

Ned seized the opportunity. "Why waste your time arguing, Dad? It's 'heads I win and tails you lose' for them. No matter what happens we're bound to lose business."

"That's where you're wrong, Ned," said his father, pretending to be happy. "These Dutchmen love politics so much that they'll come here just for the pleasure of an argument."

"Except those who go elsewhere. That crowd you entertained, what did they buy? *Niks*. Achteruit ate our dried peaches all the time he sat hatching that box of ostrich eggs. And if Van Koeker warms the sack of mealies any longer they'll be sprouting."

"I'm not going to let them get the better of me," roared Oakley. "Damn cheek to come saying English is a bastard language borrowed and stolen from all over the world."

Ned shrugged his shoulders and said no more. It was very un-South African, he knew, to decline a debate on any question affecting the relative superiority of the Englishman over the Dutchman, or the Dutchman's language, his wife, his ox, or his ass; but the study of the firm's books was a far more urgent and serious matter. Pressing debits were heavy, long credits had been given to many of the Boers, and recently some of these had kept Oakley waiting far beyond the dates on which payment was due. It was one way of evening up the racial score. To force payment legally was difficult, even if Oakley could

overcome the reluctance of his nature ; but the traders at Cape Town and Port Elizabeth had to be paid, for if the firm failed to meet its bills credit would be withheld and the business come to a full stop.

"How about going for Broekstap, father?" said Ned. "He can pay, but won't . . . that £100 will come in very useful on the first."

Oakley shook his head. "What can I do?" he answered. "His wife's had to have an operation . . . you can't push a poor devil in such circumstances."

And it was the same with any name that cropped up—the father always found some excuse for the malingerer, while business steadily went from bad to worse. Unionstad was too small to support anything —business, church, concert, newspaper—without the undivided help of the whole community ; and Oakley had lost the Dutch custom almost completely. The store was overstocked ; the bills were due, liquidation stared them in the face. The bank would do nothing. Ned's intuition told him that the establishment which received their takings daily would be useful only until such time as its help was needed. His father interviewed the manager and came home a sadder but wiser man. Ned as a forlorn hope made an attempt, too, and learned that apparently the prime principle of banking is : "When a man needs an overdraft it is time for him to take his business elsewhere."

As he came out, Ned passed in the passage an Indian who had recently hired a plot of land and erected on it a cheap galvanized iron hut, which he used as a shop.

"Excuse me, sar," said the fellow with the fez, "you Mistar Oakley Juniar?"

"Yes."

"You object to my colour, sar, for business proposal?"

Surprised, the young man stopped. "Business proposal," he replied. . . . "What business proposal?"

"I sometimes in the way of moneylendar, sar. . . . Perhaps . . .?"

"You would lend me some?"

"If you wish, sar."

Ned controlled himself very well in the face of this extraordinary suggestion for a coloured man to make to a white South African. Simulating interest he asked: "What security do you suggest?"

"I take morrgage on your beesiness, sar," was the suave reply. "What you say, sar?"

"Go to hell, that's what I say."

Ned strode swiftly and angrily away. He was furious at the incident; for this coolie to make such a proposition was evidence that their difficulties were notorious in the dorp.

When his father heard of the Indian's offer he was equally incensed, on different grounds. He had not the true South African's contempt for colour, but he ascribed to the coolie much of his present embarrassment.

Mahomet had opened his *Winkel* at the psychological moment that Hertzog and Botha's political differences were beginning to split the Boers into two bitter factions. Little by little the tiny business extended. There was no general store but Oakley's in Unionstad, and at first the Englishmen treated the subjects of their great Eastern Empire as of no signifi-

cance whatever. But some of the Hertzogites found Oakley's views so objectionable that they transferred their custom to the coolie, first clandestinely and then openly. Mahomet proved to be a cheap and obliging little man, who not only knocked off liberal discounts and put in compliments and free chocolates for the children, but who agreed heartily with every one's political views and ambitions.

Soon the news spread that the coolie was 33 per cent. cheaper than Oakley, which was true; for his family formed the staff, and they all subsisted frugally on rice; living, eating and sleeping upon the premises, while the Oakleys occupied a large house away from the store and there employed two half-Hottentots, as well as several Kafirs and a white man in the business itself.

The coloured trade of Unionstad had already passed to the Orientals. This was a serious matter to Oakley's business—coming as it did just when the boycott of the extreme Dutch had so weakened his position, it eventually proved the decisive nail in his coffin.

Only one thing could save their name and the good-will of the business—an immediate sale. Ned said so to his father.

"What's the good of talking like that, Ned? Who's going to buy a bankrupt business at five minutes' notice?"

"Well . . . the Indian will for one," was the sarcastic reply.

"And you think I'd sell to a damned coolie!"

"I don't. But if he'd buy or lend money on the business it must have a value."

"Of course it's got a value," growled Oakley.

"Stock in hand £5,000; there's £4,700 on the ledger —building—goodwill."

"Political connection," added Ned, who, like his father, had the English hatred of showing any emotion, and hid his inner feelings of pity and sorrow behind a mask of flippancy. "Suppose I find a buyer," he continued, "what would you sell for, Dad?"

"Have you got a buyer in view, Ned?"

"Not that I know of . . . an idea, perhaps. How much for the place, lock, stock and barrel?"

"Bare cost," said the father, "that's all I ask—enough to pay off what I owe when the bills fall due next week."

"Righto," chirped Ned. He gaily pulled a light holland jacket over a heavy heart and went briskly down the street. A short walk brought him to a white-walled house with Dutch gables backing the brick-tiled *stoep*. Grape vines clustered everywhere, and as it was early summer only bunches of tiny green berries represented the purple and gold fruit that in two months' time would hang everywhere. The romance of these surroundings was brought into stronger relief by a brass plate beside the door which bore the inscription—

JOHANNES VAN RYN, J.P.

Law, Estate and General Agent and Broker,
Sworn Translator and Valuator,
Farms bought or sold.
Representative for the Transvaal Life and Fire Assurance, the Orphan Building Society, etc., etc.

Van Ryn was at home. "Hullo, Oakley, what have you come to see me about—money?"

"Yes," said Ned, "money."

"*Allemach*, but you're sharp on the nail, eh—how much do I owe you?"

"Oh, it's not that, I want a lot of money; much more than you owe us."

"Hullo," said Van Ryn. "What's up, business bad?"

"Yes."

"Ah ha . . . Jingo ideas don't pay, eh?"

"No."

"The Afrikanders don't buy so much from you now?"

"No."

"Where are your English friends?"

"There aren't enough of them," answered Ned frankly.

"So you come to me for money . . . why should I lend your father . . .?"

"I'm not asking you to lend money, Mr. Van Ryn." Ned's tone was proud and stubborn. "I want to know if you'd like to buy the business; everything as it stands, a going concern."

Van Ryn sat back in the *riempje* arm-chair and whistled. Then he looked sharply at the boy. "Why do you come to me?"

"Because you've got money and because it needs an Afrikander to run the business to-day. You could make it pay—my father can't. Besides, you're interested in it."

"Interested, how?"

"You have mortgages on many farms . . . people who owe us large sums, and now deal with the Indian. And one day I let out to you that business wasn't too

good . . . and you let out to me, in the same way, that you'd like to buy."

Van Ryn understood just as he had understood Ned's glance in the store.

"Why didn't your father come himself?"

"Oh . . . you and he'd probably argue politics all the time," said the boy. "I can do what's necessary."

"How much does your father want?"

"£5,000 for the stock, £3,000 for the building and goodwill . . ."

"Goodwill!" Van Ryn laughed loudly. "Goodwill! *Allemach kerel* (By Jove, fellow), I'm sorry for you, but your goodwill has gone in *praatches* (chatter). . . . How much is on the ledger—£5,000?"

"Nearly," said Ned, surprised at the accuracy of the guess.

"£13,000 altogether . . . too much . . . too much."

"Sorry," was Ned's comment. "It's the best we can do." He got up to go. "Let the bank liquidate the business for the merchants."

"Sit, man, sit!" said Van Ryn. "You English are all the same, so *hoogmoedig* (arrogantly proud), so . . . how shall I say?" He wound up his description aptly in English—"so 'take-it-or-leave-it'!"

Ned did not pursue the shadow of a potential race debate, but stuck resolutely to the substance. They went into details; figures, how many carts and horses, percentage of bad debts and so on. Finally Van Ryn said, "Perhaps for £7,500 I could arrange."

Once more Ned got up.

"Where are you going?" asked Van Ryn.

"To the Indian storekeeper!"

"It's a justifiable bit of bluff," Ned thought, and it was, judging by its success.

Van Ryn knew all about the coolie's ambitions, but did not know that the Oakleys knew. He feared and disliked the coming into Unionstad of these rice-eating Orientals, excellent and oily men of business, who played on every note in the gamut of human nature; buying, selling, lending and borrowing, always at a profit. Now they were cutting the rate of interest on loans, and a little mild usury was fast becoming a luxury of the past.

"What would your father's very lowest price be . . . supposing I could find the money?"

Ned saw that Van Ryn meant business, but he felt that £13,000 was far more than the astute Boer would ever pay. After all, the Bank would give him its assistance to acquire the stock and goodwill if the business went into liquidation, by doing which it would secure almost a monopoly of the finance of Unionstad, for Van Ryn had wide interests—mortgages, promissory notes and bills of exchange were constantly passing through his hands.

Having reflected for a few minutes, Ned firmly answered, "£10,000."

Van Ryn sucked his pipe thoughtfully a little more and said: "I'd have to make certain conditions."

"What are they, Mr. Van Ryn?"

"Well, for one thing you mustn't open another store in the Unionstad district."

"That's fair."

"And then"—puff, puff—"your side must pay transfer fees, stamps and brokerage."

"Brokerage, what brokerage?"

"I charge 2½ per cent. as agent in this deal, of course," said Van Ryn.

Ned laughed. "Oh, all right . . . I think I can persuade my father to stand it."

"There's one other thing," pursued the elder man. He had made up his mind on this during the progress of the negotiations. "You must agree to stay with me for a certain time after I take over."

"Why, Mr. Van Ryn?"

"To show me a few things connected with the business. You see, I don't understand store-keeping."

"Father may agree to that, Mr. Van Ryn—it's his business and his sale—personally I'm going to clear out of Unionstad."

"*Ach*, Oakley, sit down and have a cup of coffee."

Van Ryn went to the door and called out: "Sara, Sara, bring us two cups of coffee." He turned to Ned again: "What for do you want to go away from Unionstad?"

"Fed up! Too much politics."

"Where do you want to go?" said the old man with slyly twinkling eyes—"to Ireland?"

"I don't care," answered Ned, dully devoid of humour, "so long as I get away from this eternal bickering between Dutch and English."

"You stay with me," said Van Ryn, "and try how we get on together—you'll find me all right—we won't talk politics."

"No," was the set reply.

At this moment the coffee came in.

"Wasn't the maid there, Anita?" asked Van Ryn in Dutch.

"No, father." Anita indicated the sugar with a

graceful movement of the hand. She was a wonderfully smart-looking girl; tall, slim and not a bit gauche. Ned stared so obviously at her that Van Ryn was reminded that he had forgotten the introduction. "My daughter only came home from the Seminary this morning," he explained. "I forgot you did not know her."

"Oh, but I met Mr. Oakley years ago," said Anita.

She possessed a refined voice and her accent was far less colonial than Ned's. Indeed, she spoke both English and Dutch with elegance.

Ned cried: "I remember. Usen't we to play together on the Market Square?"

"Yes," she answered, "but I couldn't speak English then, and you couldn't speak Dutch . . . can you now?"

"Oh yes," he replied.

She went on: "I used to call you '*Engelsman*' and '*Witkop*,' and you called me 'Snub Nose.'" Then all of a sudden she stopped.

"Anita, fetch us some *komfyt*, will you?"

"Yes, father!"

As she went Ned saw the grace of her healthy walk, and she passed him sideways, revealing in profile a nose that was no longer snub.

For Ned all women in the world could be divided into two categories: those whose noses turned down and those whose noses turned up. Anita's nose had only the slightest little tilt imaginable, but in the right direction. It went up.

Johannes Van Ryn, though astute politically and in business, knew nothing of this nasal psychology, or else he might have been puzzled to know what to do

just then. Obviously he wanted Ned to stay on at the store in order to keep the British and pro-British connection. But if he had guessed that Anita's retroussé nose was the bait which attracted the boy, Van Ryn would as likely as not have given up his project completely. For, except in politics, he was a scrupulously honourable man, who would have scorned the idea of employing the attractiveness of his daughter to help him in business.

Anita now entered with the *komfyt*, an exquisitely flavoured preserve made from melon skins. Ned had had time to recover and behaved with such discretion that Van Ryn's mind easily transposed itself back to business. By a quick glance the boy saw Anita's brown hair and a few delicious freckles on each side of her nose. And freckles are healthy things which almost inevitably appeal to healthy males like Ned Oakley.

"Well now, *kerel*," said Van Ryn, after Anita had disappeared, "how about my little plan, hey? Suppose we say a year's agreement—afterwards you can make a fresh arrangement if you don't like any more to work for me."

Ned swallowed the *komfyt* which at that moment filled his mouth.

"What salary?" he asked after the final gulp.

"Well, what do you want?" was the cautious question.

"Father pays me £12 a month, but of course I live at home, and it's different for one's own family, isn't it?"

He might have added that the business would in time have become his own property.

"Well, look here"—Van Ryn stirred his coffee—"I'll give you £16 a month"—and seeing dissatisfaction on the young man's face, he added, "and five per cent. of the profits."

"If my father accepts," said Ned, "I do." And they shook hands on the deal.

Then the boy went home to wrestle with his conscience and his father, two very stubborn Englishmen. They argued and contended for three days, during which on many occasions the transaction nearly fell through. But the memory of a slightly snubbed nose, splashed with freckles, was ever before Ned; and in the end his will prevailed, and the business passed into the hands of Johannes Van Ryn, with Ned Oakley nothing but a superior assistant, a position, in regard to a Boer, which his father considered almost degrading.

CHAPTER III

TWO STREAMS AND TWO "JONGS"

AFTER his retirement from business, Thomas Oakley pottered about Unionstad for a while, and then bought some land outside with the intention of farming on a small scale. He retained his seat in the Municipal Council, a relic of the past position which he had enjoyed as leader of the small English colony, and a reminder of those days when municipal and district matters were not decided on racial lines. It was then possible for a Councillor to be elected purely for his business qualities or general usefulness to the community; but ever since the split between Hertzog and Botha, all such elections had been fought on the sole issue of Nationalists versus South African Party, or in other words—Dutch ideals versus British. In some of the larger dorps, the purely British or Unionist Party formed a third section; but in Unionstad it did not exist in numbers sufficient to count. Oakley knew that when his time was up he would not be re-elected; he was resolved to "stick it out," and give the Hertzogites as much trouble as he possibly could.

Ned Oakley, at £16 a month, now practically managed Van Ryn's store. And not only did he retain the English custom, but he attracted several good clients among the Dutch as well. Van Ryn put the moral screw on some to induce them to stop trading with the Indian; others were made to pay

up. One of these was Broekstap, whose "wife had needed an operation." He soon produced the hundred pounds odd owing to the firm; and Ned's judgment of the slim back-velder was borne out by the discovery that the "operation" was the erection of a five-pound tombstone, Mrs. Broekstap having been dead some years. Other slow payers were also "livened up" by Van Ryn, who in several cases was found to hold mortgages upon their farms. All round, indeed, the business at the early part of 1914 was rapidly improving. The last season had been a great improvement on the drought of 1912; Van Ryn was quite satisfied with his purchase and kept telling Ned that he would be foolish not to stay on at the end of his stipulated year, since prospects were so good.

The fly in the ointment was the cut-throat competition of Mahomet, the Bombay coolie, and the consequent failure of Van Ryn to recover the coloured trade, which daily became more important in Unionstad. For not only were the inhabitants of the location increasing far more rapidly than the white population, but they were acquiring new and expensive tastes which had to be gratified. No matter how hot it was, imitation of the white man and his cold-country clothing compelled the blacks to wear full and expensive suits, hats, boots, ties, collars and the other useless foppery of civilization. Mahomet supplied it all. He treated his black customers as deferentially as his white—when the latter were not there—and like the parliamentary candidate's wife, he never neglected the babies. But most important of all, his prices were lower than Van Ryn's. In the face of these things the white traders were at a dead end. If they reduced

their rates to the coolie level, the coloured customers would still prefer Mahomet, his overwhelming obsequiousness, his "pasellas," his compliments, his sympathy, his love of babies—in short, the whole of his colossal and oily Orientalism.

Van Ryn now daily discussed the Indian and his methods, a subject which was becoming an obsession with him. Unless something were done it seemed that business, instead of extending, would decrease. And suddenly the political situation, which had steadily grown worse in 1913, was converted into a national crisis by the breaking out of war in Europe; far from the centre of actual suffering as they were, the Boers were profoundly moved by events.

When the news came through that Germany had invaded Belgium, it would have seemed to a stranger that business at Van Ryn's was booming, so large and animated were the groups which foregathered in the store. But for every yard of pink print unrolled, there was a Blue-book of debate.

Jacobus Ferreira, one Tuesday, loudly said: "Shameful, shameful, for Germany to fall on a little country like this. But they are already punished . . . the Belgians killed a million Duitsters at Liège alone."

"Where did you see that, Koos?" asked his brother-in-law, Barend Oosthuisen.

"It's a Reuter cable . . . go and see for yourself . . . it stands on the board of the *Unionstad News*."

"Ach, you saw six '0's' instead of three—it must have been 1,000."

"I tell you it's a million."

"*Ach, jij's gek*" (ach, you're mad), was Oosthuisen's retort.

"It looks like you are a pro-German, hey, Barend?" remarked Ferreira severely.

"I don't forget that the Germans stood by us when we fought the Khakis."

"Stood by us . . . how . . . where? Their *verdomde* Kaiser sent Kruger a telegram once, but when the old President went to see him, he wouldn't even let him come in Germany!"

And Ferreira's sympathizers cried "*Ja* . . . that's true," while some laughed at Oosthuisen.

"So that is why you now shout 'Rule Britannia' and 'God save the King'?"

"No, I don't," replied his brother-in-law, "but I stand for right—for France too and Belgium. Don't forget we Boers are French as well as Dutch."

Oosthuisen grew very angry. "French!" he cried, "French!! The only French that the National Scouts ever knew was General French! They and he were good friends."

It was now the turn of the bitter-enders to laugh. "I'm as good a Boer as you are, Barend," retorted Ferreira, "although you have a Dutch name and mine is French."

"No *jong*," jeered Oosthuisen—"your name's Portuguese."

And in this way the Union of the two races was daily achieved in Unionstad.

O'Flinnigan at first made a valiant pretence of siding violently with the Allies. For instance, when taking over the news of any defeats from the Press of the larger towns, he duly turned them into victories, by means of clever headlines, but very soon the circulation told him that there were pro-Germans in the dorp and

district. After six weeks he wrote a leader admitting that the Germans were not yet defeated, and that it would be some time before " our boys cross the Rhine." The stouter loyalists thought this very weak, but when tackled about it in the Masonic Hotel, O'Flinnigan defended his point of view on the ground that it was necessary for him to awaken the slackers and rouse the country to a sense of its duty.

As the military age in England was then thirty-five, and he himself was thirty-eight, O'Flinnigan began to write leaders exhorting the young men to come forward and " serve their King and Country." This pleased the loyalists, and acted as an offset to the paper's periodical admissions that " the war is not yet over . . . Germany is undoubtedly a very powerful force," etc., etc.

When the age limit in England was later on raised to forty, O'Flinnigan stopped writing about enlistment. After all, he could not very well go on abusing " young slackers," two years older than himself, particularly as some of his readers, apart from the pro-Germans, were growing very touchy on the subject. So he wrote a very clever article explaining that his previous promptings had been directed only to " fit young men *born* at Home " ; and by a subtle touch at the end contrived to leave the impression that " we " are not fit. Only, like the hidden significance of the weather-cock, his definition of " fit " never transpired.

The Rebellion late in 1914 placed the *Unionstad News* on the horns of a dilemma from which a less astute director would never have disentangled himself. O'Flinnigan took a swift and heroic decision—he closed down the paper for a month, and went to False Bay

for a holiday! It was a masterpiece of judgment and strategy on the part of the proprietor, which the editor completed by a black-bordered leading article as follows on his return:—

"To create discord, dissension and strife between the people of Unionstad is neither our aim nor our function. On the contrary, we desire to see everybody living in concord, harmony and peace, so that the glorious inheritance of our forefathers, this Land of Hope and Glory, may become our Destiny, a Promised Land indeed, overflowing with milk and honey. For this reason no news or comments concerning the recent lamentable occurrences in the Free State and Transvaal will appear in the *Unionstad News*. If any of our readers would regard this as an omission, we beg him to remember our intention to offend none, but to heal instead the wounds of strife and discord."

"If dey can make head or tail out of it," he said to himself, "it's more den I can." He smacked his lips over "Land of Hope and Glory," which the Boers would associate with Moses or Joshua, rather than Elgar, while "milk and honey," he knew, always went down well with this pastoral people.

It did not require the exhortation of an O'Flinnigan to create unrest in Ned Oakley. From his point of view the Rebellion was all wrong; and with a few other British-thinking young men of Unionstad, he joined Botha's forces to end the trouble in the Free State. Van Ryn violently disapproved, and when he failed to be convincing, protested that "this clearing off" was a breach of the agreement.

"All right," said Ned, "I'll come back and finish it—there are only three months to run."

But the head of the firm would not give way. "Very well then, Mr. Van Ryn . . . I'll work out my time now and join up for German West when it's over."

When Ned said this in that firm way of his which "the boss" had learned to know, Van Ryn began to think it over. The Rebellion, after all, though sympathetic to his politics, could not last long; and it would be better to let the young man go and get it over than leave altogether when his year was up. So Ned that night, having come to an understanding, called at the Van Ryns', ostensibly to arrange a few things with the head of the firm.

Anita received him in the *voorkamer*. She entirely managed the house since her return from school; Mrs. Van Ryn having been dead some years, and her father having been too occupied with business and politics of late to find time to look for another wife. Of course he would re-marry in time . . . when he found the right woman . . . for a healthy Boer of fifty it was an inevitable compliance with custom and the demands of respectability. Meanwhile Anita was the lady of the house. And Ned did not fail to note what a gracious lady she was. His own mother, a charming Kentish woman, was gentle and refined when compared with Ned or his father; but, said the boy to himself, "If Dad could see her like this he wouldn't have such narrow views about the Dutch."

Unfortunately, "Dad," although he had not yet arrived at his public damnation of "rebels" and his withdrawal from the Council Chamber, did not care to meet the Van Ryns socially. He bore his successor no

ill-will over losing the store; perhaps he was, on the whole, rather grateful for being rid of the incubus in such days as the end of 1914. But "Van Ryn's a Boer and we're British," he said.

Anita liked Ned immensely and made no maidenly pretences to him of not doing so. She refrained, however, from advertising to others her partiality for the young Englishman; because this would only cause unpleasantness between her father and herself, to say nothing of what the family and all its connections would think. Ned was a smart fellow in the store, and probably had a future before him; still he was none the less an Englishman, though born and bred in South Africa and as bi-lingual as Van Ryn himself. For there it was—his name was English, his father was "a Jingo," and now he was going to "fight against De Wet."

"So you're going off on commando, I hear," said Anita.

"Your father told you?"

"Yes," she replied; "I'm sorry."

"You think I should not go, of course?"

"No, I don't; we should all be free to do the things we believe in." She was frank, and though a Nationalist at heart, did not think every one else ought to be.

"Then," argued Ned, "why should you say you're sorry?"

"I'm sorry because you're going away."

"Oh," and suddenly blushing like a silly schoolboy, he remained silent, too much surprised and too confused to reply.

"But you won't be away long, I hope," she continued.

"You think the rebellion will soon be over?"

"Father thinks so. It's not a properly organized affair . . . the Boers aren't united . . . families are separating . . . oh, it's a miserable business."

"Yes," said Ned, "how can they fight the British Empire?"

Anita flared up quickly at this remark. "If all the Boers stood together," she challenged, "it would be more difficult for the British Empire than you think. But our people won't agree . . . they are like a lot of oxen in a kraal—all pushing, trampling and goring each other to get something they haven't got. You English are better off, because you are sheep, and at least you follow the goats—one day Milner; then Chamberlain, now it's Botha!"

"I can see you're an *oprecht* Afrikander, Miss Van Ryn"; and as Anita smiled with pleasure, he added—"by your love of politics."

Before she could prove his words any further, Maggie, the younger girl, entered the room.

"Hullo, Mr. *Engelsman*," she chaffed in a strong Afrikander accent, "you here? Antje will be pleased."

"Maggie, *blij stil!*" said Anita.

Maggie Van Ryn was two years younger than Anita, who was twenty. She looked as though one day she would be "fair, fat and forty," for at seventeen she was already fair and fat, with a jolly face, large limbs and appetite, and a jovial disposition that, combined with her ample proportions, proved most provoking to the young Dutchmen of Unionstad. These were often of the callow variety known in South Africa as "Jongs." "Jong" is, of course, "young"—one calls a young fellow "a jong," but the real "Jongs" have

obtained their name by their fondness for addressing each other as " Jong ! " in the same way that a certain class of young Englishmen were once styled " chappies," because of their habit of saying " old chap " and " chappie."

" I say, Antje," whispered Maggie, " listen."

The younger girl always called her sister by this affectionate diminutive, for Anita was not a Dutch name at all, and Maggie declared her mother must have got it out of a book. The dead Mrs. Van Ryn, it may be said, had the reputation of having been either eccentric or romantic, her husband never really knew which.

Anita listened awhile ; then she said, " What is it ? "

Maggie's face was full of mischief. She cried " sheeh," after which they heard whistles coming from the street, followed by several loud and obvious coughs. " Ta, ta-tum, ta rum te taaa, tata rum ta tum te taa," piped " the whistler." " It's that fool Klaas Kachelhopper," said Maggie.

Anita knew the Jong custom of whistling outside and she hated it intensely.

" If you want to see him, Maggie, ask him in, but for heaven's sake make him stop that idiotic whistling and ' ahem '-ing outside our house."

" I thought perhaps he'd be in the way ! " remarked the fat girl with a funny side-glance at Ned.

" Don't be a fool, Maggie ! " Anita loathed this sort of dorp humour. " Klaas will be less in my way than his own—he's always falling over his feet."

" That's why I like to see him ; he so funny to watch."

She went to open the front door, at which the

sounds of whistling and coughing suddenly ceased. "Why don't you come in, Klaas?" cried Maggie, half-bursting her fat sides with laughter.

"Isn't she a little devil!" said Anita.

Klaas was heard speaking from the street, half in Dutch, half in English. "*Kom toch 'n bietche uit Maggie . . .*" and then as she didn't go out, he continued: "I've br-rought a fr-riend . . . Mr. Achteruit along."

When Maggie heard what to her was an excruciatingly funny name, "Achteruit" (backwards), she suffocated with laughter, and her merriment convulsed Anita and Ned inside the room.

"His father, old Achteruit, sits on our mealies all day and talks politics," said Ned.

A creaking of the gate and a shuffling of feet across the *stoep* was next heard, followed by the sound of Klaas's voice. "Allow me to introduce my fr-riend, Mr. Gerard Achteruit," said the Jong, very awkwardly, in his best English. Klaas belonged to a strictly un-British family, and he manifested the fact whenever he could by speaking English with an atrocious accent.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Achteruit," welcomed Maggie, with killing stress on the last word.

"The pleasure is entirely mine, Miss Van Ryn." Gerard had learned the phrase out of a sixpenny book, called *Etiquette*, and he spoke with a pride that was almost affectation. "Is your sister home, Maggie?" asked Klaas, who had not brought his friend along without a profound reason.

"Oh yes, Anita's inside."

"Won't she come out on the *stoep* so long?"

Kachelhopper now leaned against the name-plate to support himself, in true Jong fashion.

"Ach no," said Maggie. "You come in. I'm sure Anita would like to meet Mr. Achteruit."

"The little fibber," whispered Anita, but half-enjoying the fun too.

"She's r-rader strict, isn't she?" And as Maggie encouragingly nodded "No," he asked, "Is she alone?"

"Ach what, come in and see her, then."

Clumsily the two youths followed the fat girl inside, their boots clanking on the polished floor of the passage. Maggie opened the door of the voorkamer, and half dazed, like a pair of blinded bats coming into the light, Kachelhopper and Achteruit perceived Ned's half-laughing face. But Anita had by now got beyond enjoying the joke, and the reception she gave the Jongs was icy in the extreme.

"Oh, I'm sorry . . . er . . . er . . . beg your pardon . . . didn't know you had visitors," stammered Achteruit, quite at a loss for the correct phrase in a situation that had not been anticipated by *Etiquette.*

"Oh, it's all right," said Ned, "I came to see Mr. Van Ryn on business. . . . I'm going now." Anita looked at him annoyed.

"My father will be home by nine o'clock sharp. He's got a meeting of the School Board."

"Politics," thought Ned, "more politics!"

"So you haven't much longer to wait," proceeded Anita. "Sit down—I'll get some coffee."

Maggie was watching Klaas and his friend to see what funny things they would do, but on hearing the magic word coffee, she animatedly called out to her

sister : " Don't forget some cakes and a little komfyt, Antje."

" I hear you are going away on commando, hey ? " observed Achteruit to Ned, who nodded " Yes."

" *Pas op kerel* . . . mind the Boers don't catch you ! "

And both the Jongs found this remark so amusing that they roared with laughter.

" Well, as long as you stay home, I'll be safe," retorted Oakley in the Taal. Neither Kachelhopper nor Achteruit discerned the underlying sarcasm, and they turned to Maggie. " How about a little music, hey ? "

" *Ja, do* play something, please, Maggie," implored Klaas, who thereupon got up to rifle the music-cabinet, and fell over the piano stool.

Maggie laughed so that she seemed likely to go into convulsions, but was restored by the arrival of Anita and Sara, the black maid, who bore between them two trays full of coffee and sweet stuffs.

" Let me help you, Antje," she offered.

" Hungry again, Maggie ? "

" Don't be so mean *toch*," said the latter, helping herself to a preserved *naartje* and three slabs of *mebos*. " I only had a very little tea this evening." Admiringly Klaas watched Maggie eat ; such a girl, he reflected, would never get thin ; not like Anita, who was altogether too *skraal* (scraggy) for his liking, though she might be well enough from an English point of view. Klaas had the primitive man's love of fat women ; though had anyone told him he was like a Kafir in this respect he would have been highly offended. The sight of a protuberant Boer girl—" *beeste vleesch*,"

as he described it, "down to the hocks"—would disturb him for days; and full of amorphous hopes, and many pimples, he would meditate silently upon the future prospects of matrimony. Both Klaas and his friend Achteruit were young men much troubled by the amorous ideas of colonial youth. Sympathy of mind in this respect had drawn them together; after their clumsy, innocuous fashion, they "hunted in couples." It occurred to Klaas that Maggie's older sister would be in the way, unless his friend came along to look after her; and Achteruit, fortunately enough, was greatly attracted by the refinement and personality of Anita, whom he had seen often since her return from the Seminary. Achteruit rather prided himself on his own refinement. He read *Etiquette* long and arduously whenever he felt the need of severe study, and took private lessons in dancing instead of playing football with the other "Jongs." It greatly pleased him to know that Anita spoke English so beautifully, for he had taken great pains with this side of his education, and considered that he would rather appeal to her.

To his annoyance, however, Anita scarcely noticed him, and when she did, spoke Dutch, while to Oakley she addressed herself in English.

Van Ryn was heard entering the house, and passing into his office, which gave directly on to the *stoep*. Ned got up to go, for he had still to pack and arrange various details of the business. Anita passed out of the room with him.

When she returned Klaas was holding a pocket-book in his hand and showing snapshots of himself to Maggie, who unceasingly munched *komfyt*.

"Playing the game," as arranged, Anita's admirer stuck to his own preserves and addressed himself to Anita directly she entered.

"I suppose your father is annoyed that Oakley is clearing off to play soldiers."

"Why?" said Anita icily.

"Oh, I don't mean that the Englishman will kill many Boers, but it must be a nuisance to have to teach another storeman the work."

"Storeman?" snapped Anita. "Mr. Oakley is not a storeman. He's father's manager."

"Oh, manager? Now I understand why he comes in the *voorkamer*."

"So far as that's concerned," continued Anita, "it wouldn't matter if he were the storeman. We Boers are not snobs . . . you're talking like an Englishman."

At this moment Maggie jumped up screaming, with Klaas's pocket-book in her hand. He snatched at it, and she darted behind the piano, declaring her intention of finding out what were the mysteries hidden between the folds of the precious *sakboekje*. Klaas looked very serious, and begged earnestly that Maggie should do nothing of the kind. "I'll be very angry if you do, Maggie, very angry!" But Maggie went on rifling—love-letters, photographs, dried flowers, all the erotic treasures of an existence perturbed by love.

"Maggie, stop at once. Give Klaas his pocket-book!" Anita's authority, which when she exerted it was undisputed, saved the unhappy Kachelhopper from any further exposures. He stuffed back into place the tokens he loved, and carefully deposited the

pocket-book in such a manner that Maggie could not again get hold of it.

Achteruit tried to utilise the incident to bring himself into closer touch, mentally, with Anita. He smiled knowingly at his friend's distress, and hinted darkly that sacred souvenirs must indeed be hidden! But his efforts to impinge on the borders of love met with no success whatever, and Anita vacated the room when a sound on the *stoep* told her that Ned was leaving the house.

It was a very quick, informal "good-bye" at the door. Anita just pressed Ned's hand with the firm grip that she gave to all those whom she liked, in contrast to the flabby hand-slide distinctive of South African dorps. Very sincerely she said, "I hope to see you back again soon. Good-bye and the best of luck."

And as Ned went down the steps toward the gate she called out after him, "If you should meet my cousin, Andries, give him our compliments."

Ned knew that Andries was in rebellion, and the manner in which Anita concealed her anxiety and distress excited within him more admiration than ever for the Dutch girl.

CHAPTER IV

"God gave the law in lightning and in thunder,
To that lost nation bann'd and unredeemed—
A pastoral people, whom He swept asunder
Because of Baal they dreamed."—*John Runcie.*

AFTER the Rebellion, Ned Oakley returned quietly to Unionstad and resumed his work at the store. He was in no humour to talk about the wretched business, which had everywhere split the two factions asunder more widely than ever. Naturally, too, it widened the breach between the British and Dutch. Ned's father, for example, would now scarcely say "good-day" to a Nationalist. The word "Sapper" began to be heard—it was contemptuously applied to members of the South African Party because of the initial letters S.A.P. On the other hand, the party term "Hertzogites" broadened into "Nationalists," which the *oprecht* Boers welcomed as a compliment to their inflexible aspirations for a separate nationality.

Many of the loyalists, flushed as they were with the victory over De Wet, wanted to talk across the counter to Ned about the fighting, but generally a sense of dull pain and sorrow was felt, and the young Englishman when invited to discuss his exploits curtly dismissed the subject.

To Anita he explained the rapid defeat of the rebels, which was due to the speed of the Government motor-cars, which wore out De Wet and his followers. "With aeroplanes to follow," said the boy, "I doubt if the Boers will ever again be the military force they were, in spite of their courage and wonderful shooting."

"Perhaps you are right!" exclaimed Anita, "but our people have before them something greater than Majubas and Spion-Kops! The future of the Afrikanders lies in their spirit of justice and independence —in Faith, Hope and Charity."

"Faith in all *but* themselves," Ned answered; "Hope of nothing *but* themselves; Charity *to* all but themselves."

She did not stop to notice his irony, but continued: "Instead of killing men, our people will build up a greater country and help men to live . . ." He interrupted her—

"When they have given up fighting among themselves . . . will they ever? The Jews did the same as the Boers, and because of it they have not even a country to-day, despite all their intelligence. Will the Boers ever realize that they are destroying themselves?"

"Yes," answered Anita almost lyrically. "A great Afrikander will one day rise with a genius for peace instead of politics or war—another Kruger, but half Dutch, half English, with modern ideas, advanced and as broad as the world."

"He would have either a Dutch or an English name, and one would be too Dutch for the English, and the other too English for the Dutch."

Suddenly she replied: "Do you know Jan Huysmans?"

"The Nationalist? I have heard of him."

"I wish you could meet him. There is a man to lead South Africa beyond where it is now. For the moment our people are drunk . . ."

"Drunk with politics?" he suggested.

"Yes . . . drunk with politics, but they will sleep off their shame; they'll remember *eendracht maakt macht*; and join hands to create the United States of South Africa!"

"Miss Van Ryn," said Ned earnestly, "if you were a man, I could almost believe in your prophecy."

She looked at him with dignity and pain, not realizing how fervid and inspired she was on the subject dearest to those of her race.

"Now you are laughing at me."

"Indeed I'm not."

"You think we're beyond hope?" continued Anita. "You think we have no future? But our people will unite, they must unite; all the fools and scoundrels of the world can't prevent it."

"What about the natives of the country?" he asked. "They already outnumber us by five to one. In the past they fought each other; we were united. To-day we fight each other while they are united. In twenty years' time they will be at least seven or eight to our one, strong and prosperous, with one idea. Give them a Chaka with modern ideas, or a Moshesh . . . and where shall we be?"

Anita for a moment was silent. Then she said: "The United States of America had black men too and they were disunited, and yet to-day they are the richest nation in the world."

"They became so by their own work," replied Ned. "We depend on the black man to work for us. All wealth is derived from labour, and South Africans are ashamed to do manual work. Why, some people in Unionstad to-day look down on me because I work in your father's store!"

"Does anybody whose opinion you value look down on you for it?" She looked challengingly into Ned's eyes.

"No," he answered, "nobody."

Anita felt that he understood her esteem, and she returned to her first idea. "Our people are changing," she said. "Daily their ideas grow broader. Don't forget what disadvantages the Boers have had to fight against. Their ancestors were brave but narrow Protestants (Dutch and French Huguenots) who left Europe to settle in a savage country, rather than be converted. Those who remained in Europe were affected by the wonderful changes in religious and general ideas; our people were cut off from everything but the Bible and their views narrowed instead of broadening. But they have always been brave men and women and they have always fought against oppression. Do you know why your people and mine have never agreed?" She replied to her own question. "Because they are too much alike."

He did not protest.

"We are always irritated by our own faults in other people. The thing which irritates the Dutch about the English and the English about the Dutch is obstinacy."

In his own less brilliant way, Ned had often thought the same thing. To him the two races were like a husband and wife or like two partners, each an ardent admirer of the other's good qualities, but neither willing to be "under-dog."

"All advocates of a 'Top-Dog Policy' for South Africa are pernicious Jingoes who can only end in ruining the country unless they are suppressed," he said.

"The Englishman is every bit as determined not to knuckle under as the Dutchman is—they must either unite or be swallowed up by the black races."

The strong faith of Anita had recreated fresh belief in the heart of the young man. For the moment he felt that there was hope for South Africa; that Nature, by one of its miracles of melodrama, would avert the tragedy that brooded inevitably over them; and at the eleventh hour save this insignificant white civilization, just as the hero is saved from certain death in an improbable play.

But if Anita never lost faith in her people and if Ned was carried into the swirling current of her optimism, the two streams in Unionstad each day flowed more strongly in opposite directions. This was most clearly shown at the Algemeene Handelaar's where business steadily went from bad to worse. First the loyalists were dissatisfied with Van Ryn, who had formerly been discreet enough to profess that "he disapproved of a good deal about Hertzog's policy, etc." By this means he had obtained the reputation in South African Party circles of being anxious to reconcile the two factions. But once shots were fired, Van Ryn expressed himself freely. He now revealed open sympathy with the rebels, and this cost him much in trade, both directly and indirectly.

While the one faction disapproved of Van Ryn's politics, his own sympathizers had another grievance, Ned Oakley. "The *Engelsman*," they said, "has taken up arms against our folk. If you don't sack him, we shall have to go elsewhere."

"But, Willem," said Van Ryn, "Oakley has a contract for twelve months."

"Well," retorted Achteruit, "pay him off."

"You want me to give the *Engelsman* a holiday at my expense?" Achteruit was silent.

"Besides," said Van Ryn, "Oakley is a good man at his work; where shall I get anyone to replace him?"

"My son, Gerard, would be willing to do your books." He spoke of the "Jong" who studied *Etiquette* and called Ned a "storeman."

"If I pay Oakley off now," said Van Ryn, with a sublime knowledge of Achteruit's character, "will Gerard work the three months for nothing?"

After a long pause, Achteruit replied, "Couldn't you arrange a salary somehow, *neh?*"

"How?" asked Van Ryn.

"Is Oakley's contract in writing?"

"Yes," said the storekeeper, wondering how far his man would go.

"But if you sacked him, he might go *somaar so* (like that). Try it, Johannes . . . we are old friends you and I—in the veld we used to eat *pap* together."

"Willem," retorted Van Ryn, "you are now as bad as a general in parliament. I don't like generals in parliament. Whenever I complain about anything, they say, 'Now, look here, old friend, you and I used to eat *pap* together!'"

"Ach, Johannes, you can surely give my son your books to do! I'm speaking for your own good . . . our people will go to the coolie store if the *Engelsman* stays with you!"

"Then let them go, *verdom*! Am I not my own baas?"

The Indian's name was gall and wormwood to Van Ryn. Mahomet was indeed one of the only two inhabitants of Unionstad who benefited by the eternal dissension. As each fresh outburst of race hatred drove new business to his tin shanty, the Indian rubbed his hands, and indulged in dreams of an extension to his premises, and a comfortable future in Bombay or Calcutta, where life was even cheaper than he made it in Unionstad.

The other person who benefited by the disunion of Unionstad was the man who entered the store a few seconds later as the anger of Johannes Van Ryn flamed to its highest point. He was a stoutish individual of medium height, with vigorous frame and a short thick beard. Keen eyes bulged somewhat from his full brows, which only made them appear more humorous ; his nose was pendulous but full, his voice throaty, virile and resonant, especially in the articulation of words containing the letter "l." Indelibly stamped all over the newcomer was the mark of the Slavic Jew. His name, one felt, inevitably ended in "ok," "witz," or "sky"; and as he advanced jovially saying, "*Dag Oom! hoe gaat het?*" with an accent that made the unpretentious Taal as guttural as Yiddish, it was like the inevitable completion of a phrase in music. Van Ryn replied: "How goes it, Schlimowitz?"

Outside the door, an untidy but tough Cape horse banged his feet into the sun-baked soil, and swished a long tail at the biting flies. Schlimowitz mopped his brow with a big coloured handkerchief, which could be used on several of these sweating days without showing the effects. Then he called to a coloured boy who was

unrolling Boer tobacco: "Go and give my horse vater."

After this he asked Van Ryn to allow a feed of oats as well, and the head of the firm cried out the necessary orders. The boy led away the Hebrew's horse, which was truly a poor and unpretentious animal. But still it was a horse, and in those days of rebellion a horse cost money. Before owning the steed, Schlimowitz had made his periodical visits to Unionstad on a bicycle; not a high-class free-wheel, but something he had bought in an auction-room while in Johannesburg, disposing of fowls. On this comfortless contraption, the poor Jew covered many hot and weary miles, pedalling the muscles of his legs into such a condition that they resembled the thighs of those athletic roosters which he bought and sold. But the soft muscles of prosperity pleased Schlimowitz more; and within a few months he had parted with the worn-out bicycle to an equally worn-out Boer, who "acquired" the animal from a rebel, and was only too ready to get rid of it before the Veld-Cornet came down on him. Schlimowitz did not worry a great deal about this particular Veld-Cornet. There were private reasons—something to do with a heifer which the official had sold to the Jew. The Veld-Cornet unofficially acted as Pound-Master. Schlimowitz winked as he bought the heifer (it was *very* cheap!) and murmured "*slaap gerust*" (sleep well)—"I'll sell it to a Kosher butcher in Johannesburg." Since then he had bought many a cheap heifer in the same way, to say nothing of an occasional ox. And thus it was that now he had the horse. In the first stage, when Schlimowitz landed from Odessa, he thought, as a Russian Jew, that it was

a good thing to be pitied. Often, therefore, he played the " *schnorrer* " (beggar) in business, asking for bargains almost as charity. But soon his quick intelligence discovered that it was better to be envied than pitied. The bicycle became a horse ; the horse would soon become one of a pair drawing a Cape cart . . . petrol was still so abominably dear . . . *oy, yoy, yoy !*

" Where do you come from now ? " asked Van Ryn.

" Blikkesdorp," said Schlimowitz, pointing to the location.

" Blikkesdorp ! " shouted the Boer. " And what do you do there among the *swart goed ?* " (black things).

" I get plenty fowls. Eggs also."

Achteruit now came forward. " You mean to tell me that your customers will eat Kafir fowls ? "

" Vy not ? " asked the Jew. " Do you tink I put ah label on, marked ' location fed ' ? Fowls ain't like farmers—tank Gord—dey haven't got any race, or place, or politics." Then he jumped and scratched vigorously, adding as an afterthought : " They've got plenty *luis*, though."

" How about pigs, Schlimowitz ? Do you buy them also ? "

" Vy not ? The Talmud says nothing about buying or selling pigs."

" Location pigs ? " persisted Van Ryn. " Have you seen what they eat ? "

" I should vorry," jeered the Jew. " My troubles vat dey eat . . . so long as I don't eat them."

" Schlimowitz," said Van Ryn to the impenitent Jew, " what do you think of Smuts's last speech ? "

" Speech ? " answered Schlimowitz carelessly, " vat speech ? "

"What speech!" yelled Van Ryn, while Achteruit collapsed upon a sack of yellow sugar, and exclaimed, "*allemach!*"

"What speech!" the storekeeper screamed. "Here is Smuts smearing mud all over the Afrikanders, and you come and ask me 'What speech?'" And as Schlimowitz tried to atone for his error, Van Ryn strode up and down the store bawling, "*allemach kerel*, are you also a Jingo?"

"Certainly not. Vy should I be a Jingo? Vat has Jingo ever done for me?"

Then he explained to Van Ryn that travelling always, he occasionally missed the newspapers, although he neglected to say that this made no difference, since he rarely troubled to read anything but Yiddish, and a little Hebrew. "But isn't Smuts a Jingo, an enemy of the Afrikander people to talk against us like this?" continued Van Ryn.

"Certainly," agreed Schlimowitz, without knowing who or what it was that Van Ryn spoke of.

"Schlimowitz," asked Van Ryn, "are you a 'Sapper' or a Nationalist?" Achteruit, too, craned his neck forward for the reply.

"Do you mean in business, Oom, or in politics?"

"Nay, Schlimowitz, I mean here in your heart." And Van Ryn touched the Jew's chest and waited for the reply. Schlimowitz quickly made up his mind.

"*Als ek die waarheid vertel dan moet ek lieg*," he said; and as this sublimely characteristic bit of the Taal meant, "To tell the truth I must lie," it quickened Van Ryn's anticipations to the highest point. "To tell you der real truth," continued the Jew, "I'm

neither ah 'Sapper' nor ah Nationalist—I'm ah business man."

"Schlimowitz!" asked Van Ryn with the portentousness of a judge, "who gives you the most business?"

"I can always do mit ah leetle more," said the Jew, evading the reply. But on the faces of the two men sitting in judgment upon respective bags of sugar and mealies, was written stern disapproval . . . no more business . . . boycott.

Schlimowitz, as he sparred with words, was fully occupying his mind. He longed to tell these men what he felt—that he had no country, no party, and no club; that he had not the slightest desire to fight anyone—that, in short, all he wanted was to do business. "But if the buyer orders a thing I must deliver it," was his maxim.

"Can you keep ah secret?" he said to Van Ryn. "Don't tell anyone. I'm not a 'Sapper' or a Nationalist, I'm a Republican."

"But, *kerel*," joyfully cried Achteruit, "you are then on our side."

"Of course, only you don't go far enough for me."

But Van Ryn was a slim politician, and he had himself played the neutral game so long that he mistrusted Schlimowitz.

"Why are you for a republic?"

"Because ah republic is better for business," was the logical reply. He continued: "Ven Paul Kruger vas president, the Uitlanders weren't happy till they shifted him—vat happened? Nobody made any more money, except vun or two. But if we again had ah republic, it vould for everyone be good, vil now . . ."

"*Ja*," persisted Van Ryn, "that is all right, but why are you against a King—aren't you much freer in South Africa then where you come from?"

Van Ryn was cunning, but his mind to the Jew was open as a trussed fowl on a poulterer's table. Schlimowitz knew that the Boer at heart longed for the old days of republicanism, and that his questions were merely designed to trip the unwary.

"Yes," echoed Achteruit, "why are you against the English King?"

"I'll tell you," said Schlimowitz, with the frankness that men give away their profoundest secrets.

"When I came first to South Africa, I bought and sold wool. Just ven I was getting nicely along, King Edward vent and died. I saw ah chance—there vould be ah new King and ah coronation. I bought mit all my money, ostrich feathers. And den vat did King George do?—he vent and had his coronation without feathers . . . *shemah beni!*"

"*Ja*, that's true," said Van Ryn.

"I vent a nasty *machulla* (went bankrupt) without even making a profit out of it, because I had bought for cash. So I had to start all over again. Dat's vy I'm against Kings!"

"*Ja*, I understand; our people lost money everywhere through that Coronation also."

"I don't know about your people losing. They got my geld, anyway."

"So you are a Republican, hey, Schlimowitz?" said Van Ryn. "You are always travelling about—why don't you make a speech and tell the 'Sappers' what their King did to the ostrich farmers?"

"Oom," replied the Jew, "you know what a narrow-

minded lot of Jingoes are the 'Sappers.' If I tell them such ah ting they vont do any more business mit me . . . *nie waar nie* ? "

"*Ja nie,*" agreed Achteruit, "it is so."

"But you can tell them quietly, hey ? "

"*Seker* " (certainly), said Schlimowitz enthusiastically. "But not before vitnesses."

Ned Oakley, who had been out on the wagon to the goods station, came in perspiring. Achteruit wriggled uneasily on the sugar-bag and excusing himself a little later left the shop.

"Varm, hey, Mr. Oakley ? " remarked the Jew.

"By Jove, it is," said Ned—"99 in the shade ! "

"Vell," was the philosophic answer, "vy valk in the shade ? "

Ned roared with laughter, there was no resisting Schlimowitz—his buoyancy, his vitality, his humour.

"But look here," said Van Ryn, "you came to see me on business. What about ? I'm going to my office."

"Oh," said the Jew, "I'll come with you. I want to see you about an investment."

Van Ryn was pleased, he could do with something on the agency side, business having of late fallen off greatly. Some "Sappers" were even cancelling fire insurance policies, and risking total loss, rather than be insured with a Company represented by a "Nat."

"So you want to see me about an investment, hey ? " said Van Ryn to Schlimowitz.

"Yes," he admitted. "Can you lend me £500 at 8 per cent. ? "

"But you said an investment ? "

"Certainly," answered the truthful Hebrew—"an investment . . . for you."

"Eight per cent. is very little except on first mortgage. Have you got property?"

"I vill have if you lend me the money."

"You want me to lend the money before you give me the security?"

"Certainly not . . . I'll give you ah bill."

They were now seated in Van Ryn's office, eating grapes. "But *allemachtig kerel*, I don't want your bill. It must be first mortgage on a good property."

"All right," conceded Schlimowitz, delighted at the suggestion.

"What property do you want to buy?"

Schlimowitz drew from his pocket a paper which he crackled to accompany the words.

"I vant," he said, "to buy the *erf* (plot) on which the Indian has got his store." In his excitement Van Ryn rose. "It's all right, *Oom*," purred Schlimowitz—"I know you vant to buy it too, but I've got an option on it."

"An option?" cried Van Ryn. "I offered old Aasvogel, the attorney, to buy the land outright."

"Yes, I know, that's why he gave me the option for £25. He's a 'Sapper,' you see, and he doesn't care about doing business with you."

"And if I don't lend you the money to buy with?"

Annoyed and disappointed, Van Ryn, who had planned the purchase of the Indian's *erf*, uttered slow and measured words; then watched Schlimowitz's face for the effect.

The Hebrew seemed to suffer pain by the suggestion.

"Surely, Uncle," he said, "you're not going to drive me to do business with an Indian?"

"What do you say, Schlimowitz?"

"Vell . . . you know what stands in the Bible —if the mountain should go to Mahomet, Mahomet vont go to the wall."

Van Ryn did not remember this part of the Holy Book, but just now it sounded like a threat and a promise combined. He answered it by saying: "If I lend you the money it is on condition that you give the Indian notice to clear off with his tin house and family and goats from the ground."

"I'll agree," said Schlimowitz. "But perhaps he'll go to another *erf* and start again." The remark was carefully calculated.

"Will he?" Van Ryn spoke with underlying intent that responded instantly to the suggestion.

"Vell . . . I know you own one half of Unionstad, Mr. Van Ryn, but vat about die other half?"

"Oh, I can stop him in another quarter," said Van Ryn. "If the Indian wants to transfer his licence he must first get permission from the Municipal Council."

"Oy, yoy, that's ah *slim* trick, Mr. Van Ryn."

"It's not a *slim* trick, Schlimowitz; it's right and proper. These accursed coolies are going to ruin our land . . . we must stop them! If the British Empire wants to reward them for fighting the Germans, let it give them votes and money in their own country, India!"

"Hoor, hoor, Oom," cried the Jew.

"So far as Unionstad is concerned," continued Van Ryn, "the Nationalists will have a majority in the next

Municipal Council . . . and it is possible . . . I may perhaps be Mayor."

"Vat a hope for Mahomet then." As he said this, Schlimowitz enthusiastically patted the agent on the back. "Ven can I close the deal?"

"Before we get so far," was the cautious reply, "listen to me. I can't stop coolie trading in Unionstad unless our people have a majority in the Council. The 'Sappers' are so fond of the Empire that they will give Mahomet another licence. Now you must work for us on the quiet, and then I can lend you £500, first mortgage, at 8 per cent. Of course, I charge 5 per cent. for raising the loan."

Schlimowitz was as pleased as though he were tugging at the Czar's beard with both hands, but he thought it wise to protest against paying the 5 per cent., otherwise Van Ryn would derive no pleasure at all from the transaction, and would probably think there was something wrong with it. So the Jew declared: "It's terrible to be bled like this," etc., etc., "and whispering, 'I will ne'er consent,' consented."

CHAPTER V

"Religious discord, social strife, and racial discontent,—
The murmur of the toiling crowds, beneath their burdens bent."

—*F. C. Kolbe.*

EACH day political feeling in Unionstad became more embittered, and business at Van Ryn's went from bad to worse. The political groups in that rambling establishment now occupied different ends of the store—Nationalists on the mealies, Boer meal and flour to the left; "Sappers" on the rice, sugar and dried peaches to the right. Van Ryn tried hard to preserve the neutral attitude of a speaker in Parliament; but the rebellion had exposed his cards. Obviously and openly he assailed the Botha Government for its hostility to De Wet, using such phrases as —"Shedding brothers' blood," "Cain and Abel," and "Blood-stained Botha!"

Anita begged of her father to calm himself. She pointed out that the Government could not have done otherwise than suppress the rebellion, and when this failed to convince Johannes, she drew attention to the serious effect which his semi-public utterances were having on the business. For Anita now often went into the books with Ned, and thoroughly understood the position.

Van Ryn, when reasoned with by his daughter, became less violent, but no less determined. Once he admitted that the Government had had no alternative but to suppress the rebellion, or go into revolution itself; but he bitterly reproached General Botha for taking

the field in khaki, which, he said, proved him to be an Englishman at heart! For, to Van Ryn, khaki was a hateful product of English arrogance; and a bitter, painful memory of the Boer War. [The most noxious weed in South Africa, a greenish-brown shrub loathed by the farmers, is called "khaki-pest."]

And there were Botha and Smuts in khaki, with Sam Browne belts and Stohwasser leggings, British to the backbone!

When the Government's resolution to exact payment from the rebels for the material damage was made known, Van Ryn's anger reached its highest point. He now absolutely refused to associate with his customers on the right. Serve Ferreira or Du Plessis with sugar? . . . jackal-poison was what they deserved, the Khaki Jingoes! They were not sensitive as a rule; dorp politics had become second nature, but now they said "Van Ryn is going a little too far." So they rarely visited the Algemeene Handelaar, except to hear the news from the Western Front and the Balkans; and their purchases amounted practically to nothing. Occasionally they bought from Ned such trifles as a pound of nails or a pot of paint, if the coolie were out of stock; but all their real needs were supplied by Mahomet.

When Van Ryn entered the store (the "Sappers" generally assembled while he was at his office) the right became silent and sinister, like conspirators at the appearance of a policeman. They would whisper "*Daar kom 'Jan bloed en trane'!*" ("There comes 'John blood and tears'"), this being the nickname which had been conferred on the owner of the sacks over which they held their Imperial council.

After this the meeting would break up, for Van Ryn's coming had cast a chill over the proceedings. Ned refused to discuss politics or to be drawn into war-arguments, but they "knew he was all right," at least so they said.

But on the left how differently Van Ryn's entrance was received.

One would hear jovial shouts of "*Morer Jan*" and "*Hoe gaat het ou broer?*" ("Morning, John," and "How are things, old brother?"); tobacco would be freely passed round, sometimes Willem Achteruit would even suggest ginger-beer, which, by the way, he never paid for.

This was only on exceptional occasions, as, for instance, when the news came through that London was taken, Kitchener captured, and the Kaiser crowned in Westminster Abbey.

The Nationalists were naturally allowed more privileges in the store than their rivals. Oosthuisen's map they stuck upon the counter the same day that Antwerp fell; and thereafter no business was transacted where it lay. Nails were hammered into Brussels, Lille, and all the other captured towns (including Liverpool), with bits of calico fluttering bravely overhead. The "Left" got special information—through the wireless station of Swakopmund first, it was said, and then . . . nobody ever knew. But, at all events, their cheering stories were only equalled by some of the "official" romances which O'Flinnigan circulated in the *Unionstad News*.

What annoyed Van Ryn almost as much as Ferreira's and Du Plessis's politics was the habit these two strategists had of kicking holes in the bags. "I

wouldn't mind the sugar so much," he said one day to Ned, " but the rice runs out of the sack . . . look how much is there on the floor." It was evident that a political crisis was approaching—Van Ryn's irritation was reaching a stage when it could be no longer controlled. The first battle of Ypres did it. O'Flinnigan published in successive issues such terrifying accounts (" from our London correspondent ") of gasping Germany, mangled and maimed, tattered and torn, that by the time this ink-stained warrior had laid down the pen, Du Plessis and Ferreira, together with all their followers, were in a highly dangerous state of victorious bellicosity.

That morning they resolved to enjoy life. When Van Ryn arrived, nobody moved on the right; nobody spoke on the left. O'Flinnigan alone had defeated Germany—the " Sappers " remained at their posts, each holding a copy of " the rag "; smiling, smoking, sneering; judging and nudging, but not budging. " The rebels are *plat* (flat) to-day, *neh* ? " remarked Ferreira in a stage whisper. O'Flinnigan's offensive had done far more than the Allied army ever hoped for. On the left Achteruit sucked his pipe, chewed a mealie and spat out the pieces contemptuously upon the floor. Oosthuisen went to the map and put his finger down.

" Jan—I hear the English have advanced another yard ! "

Van Ryn laughed loudly. " *Vrachter* Barend . . . how is that ? "

" Oh," said Oosthuisen, " one of the Tommies stuck his left foot in front of the right."

Over the other side of the store, newspapers suddenly

crackled in anticipation of the fire about to be opened on the enemy.

"Koenie," said Ferreira, "the Germans are now getting it hot, hey!"

"Kerel," was the reply, "by the time Botha gets to Windhoek the Kaiser will be there to clean his boots."

"Nay, man, St. Helena's where *he'll* go."

Van Ryn strode across the store. "What do you want to buy here?"

"*Allemach,*" replied Ferreira, "you're very polite, *mijnheer.*"

"I'm glad you think so. Please be so kind as not to sit on the rice . . . when a man is such a dangerous soldier as you are, he can't keep his feet still and he spurs holes in the sacks."

Upon which Johannes returned to his supporters, amid murmurs of disgust from the right, mingled with jeering laughs from the left. Ferreira got up, or rather down, and went to the door. Du Plessis and an attorney's clerk followed him outside.

As they were going Ferreira cried: "This won't do you any good, Mr. Van Ryn!"

"Go along to your coolie brother," was the Parthian shot.

Ned was disgusted at the scene. The whole thing was so undignified, so petty, that he resolved not to stay on after his time was up. Apart from anything else the salary was small, and the prospect of increasing it by five per cent. of the profits had become negligible. Ned, however, honestly admitted to himself that he had not been seduced into the store by any hope of large profits. He had joined Van Ryn, first, because

the buyer made it a condition of sale, and, second (or was it first ?), because of Anita.

As for the slump in business, even Van Ryn's attitude was far from being entirely to blame. Things in Unionstad had now come to such a pass that at the Bioscope, the very soul and centre of dorp life, Nationalists and " Sappers " refused to sit in the same rows ; and then, by tacit consent, selected different nights on which to see Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford.

Concerts and theatrical performances fell flat, because the two factions refused to go to the Town Hall together. Van Kijk, the newsagent, who did the booking, was expected to pass the word round so that any innocent " Sapper," before paying 3*s.* for a seat, might know if " the Natties are patronizing it."

Every man's inmost thoughts were known to Van Kijk, because of the papers he read. Some of the *Ja-Broers* (" Yes-brothers "); like Oom Kaspar, who pretended to agree with both sides, might deceive the Resident Magistrate, but they could not *vernuik* him. For he knew what they paid to read.

The Unionstad Club had long since sunk into a state of atrophy. Only the " Sappers " now belonged to it, neither the Resident Magistrate, the Bank Manager, nor the Postmaster caring to take the risk of being styled " Jingoes." After all, they occupied positions of official and commercial neutrality—they could not afford to be drawn into public political discussions (all discussions in Unionstad being public) in company with Ferreira, Du Plessis and the other " Sappers," whose war zeal was positively dangerous.

At the tennis club things were no better. Sets were

arranged on rigid political lines. Mrs. Oosthuisen refused to partner Mrs. Du Plessis, who, she said, was " a spiteful little Jingo " ; and Mrs. Du Plessis retorted by telling the secretary that Mrs. Oosthuisen " is a rebel and at least six years older than she makes herself out to be." As the two ladies were cousins, it was generally considered that Mrs. Du Plessis spoke with family knowledge of her subject.

Then, added to these difficulties, which obtruded themselves into every bye-path of the social side of the game, somebody raided the little club-house and carried off a dozen balls and a couple of rackets which Mrs. Ferreira had left there. " Strange, isn't it," she observed, " that they only took my things ! Of course it is ' Sapper ' spite, because they know I don't agree with my husband's politics."

But, for his part, Mr. Ferreira was certain that the " Nats " had done it to spite him, because it would be out of his pocket that the money for new stuff came. And so it went on.

Hitherto Anita had thoroughly enjoyed playing tennis, a game of which she was a skilful exponent. She brought into it something so graceful, so rhythmic, that the banality of flat rubber shoes was forgiven, and one did not remember the frequent sight of heavy calves pounding across the glare of the brown courts, in vain endeavour to regain vanished beauty or lost social position.

Ned's was not the nature to excel in the inane compliments of the communal tennis court ; and in consequence he played very little. The ladies of Unionstad disliked meeting him there—they hinted that this was due to his serving behind the counter, though the

truth was that they objected to his service across the net. For Ned played a strenuous game—he served very hard (not a bit like the bank clerk, who was a model of decorum), and treated the ladies as though they were men. Though the feminine politicians of Unionstad claimed equality on such matters as war and rebellions, they objected strongly to being deprived of those little gallantries which young Achteruit learned in *Etiquette*, and which so many young men in dorp banks spend their lives mastering. Therefore Ned was not a *persona grata* at the club.

The few games he did play were with Anita. They thoroughly enjoyed the strife of a hard set—she the more skilful, he swifter of foot and stronger of hand; both equally determined. When they played, even politics were forgotten and everybody gathered round to see Ned smash at Anita, and her place the ball in every corner of the court, until the beads of perspiration dropped from the young man's face.

Ned could only play on Wednesday afternoons, when the store was shut, and not always then, for he occupied himself after hours with the books. People noticed his friendship with Van Ryn's daughter; it would have been strange had they not done so in times such as these. The possibility of some understanding between the handsome and unusual couple began to be discussed. Any affair involving love, courtship and matrimony was always of supreme interest in Unionstad; and if (as Mrs. Du Plessis put it) Anita and Ned "were spoony," the spice of romance was heavily added to a dorp dish that is generally insipid.

Not that there was anything unprecedented in the

love affair of a rich man's daughter and her father's assistant. Dorp life in South Africa is essentially democratic. A lord might be lionised in Unionstad, but that would make nobody anxious to cut the bank clerk. South African farmers are really the most democratic people on earth. Oakley was a decently-bred fellow; his father had formerly been mayor, though that meant little, since five minutes after a South African mayor's term ends, he is forgotten.

The piquancy of the affair—assuming that it existed—was because of its political character, which set it on the epic plane. A Nationalist's daughter (such a "Nat") and an Englishman's son! How people would talk.

Started on the tennis courts at five o'clock one afternoon the rumour radiated through the whole of Unionstad before people were asleep at ten.

Mrs. Kachelhopper paid four calls that night.

"O-O-O-O, have you *toch* heard?" she asked at Willem Achteruit's; and, disappointed that the news had preceded her, she gave details in a mixture of Dutch and English that was spoken without any idea of symbolizing the scandalous friendship of an Afrikander's daughter and an Englishman's son.

"*Raai* now, Mrs. Achteruit, ek het yesterday *naa* die Bioscope *gegaan*, en yust when I came home ek was so surprised to see Anita Van Ryn standing on the stoep with the *Engelsman*."

And they went on like this, breathlessly inventing such bits as were necessary to the story, and asking each other what should be done?

Mrs. Achteruit wondered if Van Ryn knew . . . surely not! . . . such an *oprecht* Afrikander . . .

perhaps they had better send him an anonymous letter, hey ?

Mrs. Kachelhopper was rather doubtful. " Couldn't we perhaps get into trouble ? "

" *Ach* no," was the reply. " We'll send an anonymous letter without signing it."

And she proceeded to illustrate the great good that could be done by such a composition—why Mr. Achteruit's father on his dying bed sent an anonymous letter to the chemist in Johannesdorp, warning him that his wife was a bad woman. " Oh, he was *toch* such a good man, Mrs. Kachelhopper—the last thing he did before dying, the *very* last thing, because he liked the chemist."

While Mrs. Kachelhopper was paying her calls, Achteruit was " in committee " deciding how to deal with the coming municipal elections. Young Achteruit —whom Maggie had nicknamed " Etiquette "—seized the opportunity of Van Ryn's absence to pay Anita another call. He was, of course, accompanied by his faithful friend, Klaas Kachelhopper, who admired as much as ever the amplitude of Maggie's healthy limbs. Ned was not there—he rarely went to the house without a genuine business reason ; for his pride and shyness always came between him and his desire to enjoy Anita's society.

Maggie let herself go thoroughly on these occasions. Achteruit and Kachelhopper had been to the house several times ; and the former, with the respectful admiration of twenty-one years and his principles on " Etiquette," paid Anita homage of a very formal kind. Maggie, with her sense of ridicule and mimicry, could not let the opportunity pass. After the pas-

sionate Jongs had left the house on the last occasion she gave burlesque imitations of them that convulsed Anita. Maggie was very proud when she amused her sister; for Anita could not tolerate either stupidity or vulgarity, and it took a good deal to make her laugh. But Maggie really was funny.

To-night she found Achteruit very sombre, very solemn. He had heard the rumour. And he intended to make a few sarcastic observations relative to the Englishman. Like many people who have malicious intention, but lack the power to say venomous things, Achteruit Jun. prided himself on being "very sarcastic." "Let Oakley *pas op*," he said, "if he ever bumps into me again." He meant to be nasty that night—it would teach Anita to be careful in future.

But before Achteruit could deliver his sarcasms Maggie sat down beside him and started a most refined conversation.

Gerard could not understand. He had always regarded the stout girl as "a silly kid" whose only excuse for existing lay in her relationship to Anita. If ever he married the object of his passion, he would take good care not to encourage Maggie to the house.

And here was she talking to him in a sensible, "refined" way that somehow or other he seemed to have heard before. Perhaps she had been copying her sister . . . no, for unfortunately Anita scarcely spoke at all when Achteruit was there, and certainly not on what he styled "intellectual topics."

"Mr. Achteruit," said Maggie, "do you believe in accommodating your conversation to the lady that you are introduced to?"

"Certainly."

"After meeting a lady at a public dance do you greet her first or wait till she greets you?"

"A gentleman waits until the lady greets him. It is her privilege," he said, ferociously trilling the "r," and wondering what Maggie was after.

She hitched up her short skirts at the knees, just as the young man was in the habit of hitching his trousers to preserve the crease. Stroking her head, as though arranging another fold there, she murmured: "It's a great pleasure to be in your company."

Gerard actually blushed. At the far end of the room in the shadow behind the piano, Anita was stuffing a handkerchief into her mouth.

Klaas Kachelhopper quietly examined the family photograph album.

Suddenly Gerard realized—this silly fat kid was trying to cut her sister out! She must be in love with him. He felt embarrassed—confused—but not altogether displeased. Jealousy was a wonderful thing to bring a girl round; in a vague sort of way he rather hoped that Anita would notice Maggie's attentions. Perhaps if he coughed it might draw her attention?

"Are you going to church next Sunday evening?" asked Maggie.

"Yes," he replied, wondering who it was he knew that spoke that way.

"So am I and Anita. I'm sorry we don't sit in the same pew, Mr. Achteruit. . . . Klaas is such a lovely whistler. . . . I'm sure he whistles the psalms beautifully."

Achteruit thought this remark was not quite so refined as the conversation had been up to that point.

Maggie rose, went to a shelf and returned with a small book. He wondered what was coming. She searched for a page, found it and quietly read as though committing a lesson to heart. Then she returned to Achteruit, hitched up her imaginary trousers once again, stroked her hair, felt her upper lip and with exactly the Jong's ponderous intonation said :

" May my sister and I have the pleasure of being escorted home by you after church on Sunday ? "

" The pleasure is entirely mine," he innocently replied ; but at this point Maggie could keep up the joke no longer, and her substantial sides literally shook with laughter.

Anita got up and left the room in order to spare the wretched fellow, who now realized where he had heard that voice, and those ready-made phrases before —poor devil, he had been listening to them all his life !

" Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! " screamed Maggie, " fancy not knowing yourself. . . . Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! " And she rolled on the couch.

Achteruit had never felt so ridiculous in his life. From that moment he hated Maggie with the bitterness of gall.

Kachelhopper enjoyed the humiliation of the superior one—it reassured him in regard to Maggie's affection. Anita returned and said, " Have you and my sister finished your skylarking, Mr. Achteruit ? "

She wished to pass over the ludicrous incident, for which she was annoyed with Maggie, although the result, she hoped, would induce Achteruit to stay away in future.

Soon afterwards the Jongs left. Achteruit was

solemn, but formal and polite to the last—Etiquette is not unlearned in an hour, any more than it is acquired, he thought. Gerard was determined to show Anita how a gentleman should behave in trying circumstances. Her refinement, he was certain, would make her appreciate him more than in the past. And when Oakley had been expelled from the store, by the wrath of outraged Nationalism, perhaps . . . ?

* * * * * *

Next day Willem Acheruit called on Van Ryn at his office and he opened the subject of the "*Engelsman*" in the business.

"Johannes," he said, "our people don't like the way you are keeping this *kerel* Oakley in your store."

"But, Willem, I have explained the position to you. . . . Oakley is under contract."

"*Ach* yes, that may be so, but the Afrikanders are complaining."

"Can't I do as I like in my own business?"

"They say it is very strange how you hold fast to an Uitlander."

"But, Willem, Oakley is born in South Africa! He can *praat* the Taal as well as you or I."

"He doesn't speak English like an Afrikander," persisted Achteruit; "he has a sort of an English accent."

"But so has my eldest daughter," was Van Ryn's defence. "Are you going to call her a Rooinek?"

"Your daughter . . . Anita, *neh*?" said Achteruit severely. He had not expected to find an opportunity to broach so easily the excuse of his subject. "Johannes . . . our people are beginning to talk . . .

they say you don't only employ the Rooinek, but you let him come to your house."

"I can ask whom I like to my house, can't I? Oakley comes to see me about the books."

"Our people say you ask him into the *voorkamer*; my son even met him there."

"Well?" asked Van Ryn annoyed.

"Our people say Oakley goes to see your daughter."

"*Verdom*," shouted the storekeeper. "What lies!"

"They are even saying in the dorp that Oakley and your daughter *sit op* together . . . that they are engaged."

"Who says this?" asked Van Ryn angrily.

"It is talk everywhere."

"Sapper lies," shouted the father.

"You see, Johannes," suavely proceeded the other, "this is your reward for being merciful to Oakley . . . if he was not in your business, people could not say these awful things."

"Willem, do you think I care what lies the Sappers spread about me?"

"You must *pas op*, Johannes, don't forget the Municipal Elections."

Van Ryn remained silent for a while. There was wisdom in Achteruit's words; it would not do to be defeated for the position of Mayor—when the Nationalists obtained the majority, which was assured, since every voter's intentions, inclinations and condition were known to the two sides. Van Ryn could not afford to disregard these rumours about Anita and the young Englishman; he would never be selected as Mayor if the Afrikanders thought Oakley was a favoured suitor for his daughter's hand. Even the "Sappers"

admitted that Anita Van Ryn was the most attractive girl in the Unionstad district. The Nationalists were intensely proud of her beauty and her intelligent personality—they looked upon her as a party possession, an argument to be used in the interminable debates on the relative superiority of the two races.

It was one more proof that the upright Afrikanders were the Chosen Race. To give this beautiful girl in marriage to the son of an English Jingo would be race-betrayal, something so unnatural and hideous that it could never be forgiven. As Achteruit said, the father must "*pas op.*" Van Ryn realized this; his mind travelled quickly over many aspects of the question—it rested finally on Mahomet, the coolie, the plot of land, Schlimowitz and his option, business worse than ever—£10,000 sunk in a store that would soon be losing £50 a month.

Achteruit let the words soak in. Anita brought her father's coffee, and seemed surprised to find a visitor whom she disliked in the office. With the unquenchable hospitality of South Africa, she at once went for a second cup. While she was away Achteruit remarked:

"A *prachtig meisje*, Johannes . . . *en knap ook neh?*"
(a beautiful girl, Johannes, and smart too, eh?)

"*Ja*," said Van Ryn, "Anita and Maggie lost their mother when young, but they are nevertheless fine, upright Afrikander *meisjes*."

"They will marry good Afrikanders too, Johannes? Let me see . . . how old is Anita?"

"Not old enough yet for such things," said the father. He felt what was coming.

"She must be nearly twenty, Johannes . . . *nie*

waar nie? Now, my son Gerard is just twenty-one."

"Willem," interrupted Van Ryn, who intensely disliked Achteruit's son, "Anita is too young to think of such things. *Allemach*, I have only yet been married once myself!"

Anita brought in the second cup of coffee and retired. She did not like Achteruit sen, any better than his son.

"Johannes," persisted the father of the prospective fiancé, "if your second marriage is standing in the way of your daughter, you should be wedded again without delay."

"All right," was the answer. "After the Elections."

"Nay, Johannes, *before* the Elections. Believe me, our people will never choose for Mayor a man who has no wife. It is not right, Johannes . . ."

Van Ryn did not argue. He was a busy man; but full-blooded, and, like every one else at fifty, believed himself to be in the prime of life. The difficulty was to find the right woman—one of his own party, well-to-do, and not too old or plain. "After all, if a man marries," he considered, "it is just as well to have a good-looking wife." But in addition there were his daughters to be considered, especially Anita. The future Mrs. Van Ryn would need to be some one quite out of the common if she were to assume the proper authority over so striking a personality as Anita's. For this reason Van Ryn would have preferred to see his elder daughter married, and out of the way; which was one reason he had waited so long. But a young fop like Gerard Achteruit! An "*Engelsman*" would be infinitely preferable to such a *Jong;* after all, Oakley was a man. And Van Ryn, who had

seen English cattle brought out to improve the Afrikander stock (magnificent beasts that certainly benefited the country), was an unconscious Eugenist.

After Achteruit had left the house, he went indoors. He wanted to find out what was behind this story of Anita and Oakley, though certain there was nothing in it but gossip. But Van Ryn had all the *slimheid* and suspiciousness of the Boer; it was always possible that young people would forget the sacred principles which their parents quarrelled about all day long to preserve. And yet, though Anita always respected and obeyed her father, he hesitated to tax her with his fears. She was a strange girl; the father felt that there were depths in her nature which he could never fathom. Curious, he reflected, how children outgrow their own parents. But then her mother was like that.

He decided to leave the interview until another day, and returned to the office before setting off for the store. But just then Anita came in. Her frankness always was to Van Ryn incomprehensible.

"What did Mr. Achteruit come to see you about, father?"

"Oh . . . nothing. Just to talk a little."

"He gave me a very funny look as I came in," she continued. "Did he have anything to say about me?"

"He just said you were a pretty girl."

"And Gerard a pretty boy?"

Van Ryn laughed. "*Allemach*, Anita, why do you say that?"

"Didn't he speak about his son?"

"Yes," he answered, simulating frankness. "He

did. He wants me to give Oakley's job to his son."

"What!" she cried. "That little fool. And what would you do with Oakley?"

"Well . . . they want me to sack him when his year is up . . . or before if possible."

"Why?"

"Because the Afrikanders don't like an *Engelsman* in the store; they say if Oakley stays they will buy from the coolie."

He watched her face narrowly as he spoke, searching for the reply to his unspoken query.

She flamed with anger. "I don't believe a word he says!" She forced the words passionately through her closed teeth. "It is simply to get the place for Gerard."

"Business is falling off a lot," said Van Ryn. "I can't afford to lose our people's custom as well . . . if the store goes on like this, you and Maggie will one day find yourselves as poor as *bywoners*."

She drew herself up proudly. "I would sooner be poor always than do mean things to make money. But Oakley and the English are not the cause of the bad business . . . it is you and our own people, father."

"I?" he loudly said.

"Yes . . . you and our people. I've been helping with the books lately and I've seen how it is. The customers who've left you are 'Sappers'—that's not Oakley's fault. The English customers are the same as they used to be—there are not enough of them to make any real difference to the store. Business is bad because our people won't give up quarrelling—the farmers talk politics on the stoep while the Kafirs

steal the sheep and sleep in the sun. So there is little produce to sell at the end of the season, and they have less money to buy with. Then you let people like Achteruit and Oosthuisen waste your time all day with their arguing, while the Indian sells goods to the 'Sappers' and the Kafirs, and the Jew buys all the produce from our people on the farms."

"What Jew?"

"Schlimowitz. Everybody can see what he is up to—the next thing will be that he'll open a store too."

"Nay, nay, Anita—you don't understand. Schlimowitz is a friend of mine."

"Is he?" she asked sceptically. "We'll see. Jews have no friendship . . . *except* for their own people. The Boers have no friendship *for* their own people. And so the Jews are making all the money in South Africa—when I came home from school, every store on the line from Cape Town to Unionstad had a Jewish name on it. Yet the remedy, they tell you, is to sack a good man because his father is an Englishman!"

The last words she uttered with cutting scorn. Van Ryn looked up at her half with wonder and half with admiration. What a gift for politics she had! A great pity she was not a boy.

"I hope, father, that you do not intend to do as Achteruit asks you to. I should be very sorry if you did."

"Why, Anita?" He thought that now he would find out.

"Because . . . I would not like my father to do a mean thing."

"You like Oakley, *neh?*"

"Very much, father."

"Why, Anita?"

"Because he is a man, and doesn't talk nonsense to me. He is sensible and doesn't indulge in a lot of sentimental rubbish."

Van Ryn paused for a moment after she finished. Then slowly he said, "Has he never . . . spoken of such things, Anita?"

"What things, father?"

"You know the *boch* (nonsense) that young *kerels* talk to girls . . . the sentimental nonsense."

"Oakley has never said a word to me that you could not have heard," she replied, steadily looking at her father.

Thoroughly reassured he arose. If Anita said so it was all right. *Vrijerij* (courting) was to Van Ryn a clear, cut-and-dried business—no subtleties, no finesse, no bashfulness. He went straight to the point; and as Oakley in everyday life was even more blunt, Van Ryn considered the rumour in regard to Anita as entirely dissipated. It never occurred to him that possibly he did not understand the English character, and that a plain-dealer in commerce might be extremely reticent in affairs of the heart.

CHAPTER VI

JAN HUYSMANS COMES TO UNIONSTAD

AS the Election drew near, Van Ryn felt that some sinister influence was at work against him. The Nationalist agents reported that secret dissatisfaction with the leading citizen of Unionstad existed over a wide area. They recommended that a bold step be taken to recreate the popularity of Van Ryn, so as to insure his election both as Councillor and Mayor of the dorp. Johannes was by far the ablest politician in this part of the country, he was talked about for the Provincial Council and even the House of Assembly. And in view of stirring eventualities it was essential that he be in the position of chief citizen.

Various reasons were assigned by different committeemen for the hostility abroad. Achteruit declared that it was due to Oakley's being employed in the store; Oothuisen said it was because Van Ryn spoke English nearly as much as he did Dutch. But the general opinion was that the rumour in regard to Anita and Ned still persisted.

Van Ryn, however, had arranged something not only to silence this gossip but to put an end to his own domestic perplexities. Of his plans he spoke to nobody. He would see . . . ?

The immediate excitement in Unionstad was the forthcoming visit of the famous Nationalist speaker, Jan Huysmans. This event enormously interested both parties. Huysmans was a far different type from

the petty politicians of Unionstad—bitter of tongue in his public speeches, but said to be idealistic even in his racialism. He believed sincerely in a great future State that would spread over the whole of Southern Africa, independent of the British Crown, governed and directed solely by Dutch-speaking Afrikanders. But was hatred to him a divine attribute like faith, hope or charity, as his enemies declared; or was his inscrutable heart touched with forgiveness for the English, who had annexed the Republics, as well as with love of his own people? It was a subject upon which people never agreed.

Huysmans was of pure Hollander descent, handsome, commanding, cultured; he spoke several languages with grace. The Dutch he used in public speeches was that of a statesman, much of it incomprehensible to the simpler Boers. But Huysmans' heart brought him into sympathy with his people. Here was a man, they said, who felt as they did—unquenchable hatred for all things English, with the courage and genius to execute his desires. If this ideal of a Dutch South Africa were ever realized, Huysmans, they declared, was destined to be its leader.

Van Ryn was discussing the great man at dinner one day when Anita said: "Why not get him to come here and address a meeting?"

"*Ach*, Anita, he will never be able to come—Parliament is sitting . . . he is so busy."

"Would you like me to ask him, father?"

"Do you know Huysmans, Anita?"

"Yes," she answered with a touch of pride. "I was introduced at the prize distribution . . . we had a long talk."

"What about?"

"Politics, of course, father. Mr. Huysmans was quite interested in my school-girl views, as he styled them."

"I hope you treated him with proper respect, Anita?"

"Oh, yes, father. I have a great admiration for Mr. Huysmans—he is a splendid man. In fact we became great friends."

Van Ryn felt a warm glow of satisfaction pass through him.

"And you think he'd come to Unionstad, and speak for us, Anita?"

"I do," she replied. "If you like I'll write at once and ask him."

"Don't say anything definite, Anita—I must consult the Committee, you know—but ask if he would come. . . . You know what I mean, *neh*?"

Two days later Huysmans telegraphed to tell Anita he would gladly come if invited. Trembling with excitement Van Ryn carried the buff sheet to the Committee, who at once sent a long and formal telegram of invitation. Then the word went round that it was "Van Ryn's daughter" who had engineered the whole thing. "Just fancy, *hey*!" said the ladies at the tennis courts. And there were "*raai nous*" and "*sis tochs*" and "*reely heys*" murmured all over Unionstad, and in Nationalist circles Anita became a greater personality than before.

And her father, influenced by this outside opinion, hesitated more than ever to select definitely a Mayoress who could at the same time act with dignity as a step-mother to such a strong-willed young lady as his daughter.

Provisionally Van Ryn had already elected the

candidate. She was a widow in comfortable circumstances, living on a farm twenty miles away. Johannes had selected her for excellent reasons. In the first place, she was his own cousin. Then her late husband had been not only Van Ryn's cousin but his most intimate friend as well.

Mrs. Fredericka Viljoen was still a good-looking woman, on the right side of forty, with only one surviving child. Ever since her husband's death, Van Ryn had administered her affairs, and he knew to a penny how much she possessed. On the financial side, the solitary son was no impediment whatever to the match. And yet Hendrik, this young man, was the stumbling-block. Sad to say he had, at the age of nineteen, joined one of Botha's commandoes to suppress the Rebellion. It was very unfortunate, very. . . . There was no woman but his mother whom Van Ryn knew to be so eminently qualified for the position of Mayoress of Unionstad. Apart from this act of her son, there was no stain upon her record. Even the Predikant admired her character and her figure; had he himself not married a rich woman Mrs. Viljoen would have been snapped up long ago. Van Ryn knew all this. He had made inquiries. It was all part of the scheme for rehabilitating himself with the *oprecht* Afrikanders.

The first thing was to prepare for Huysmans' coming. Of course the great man would be Van Ryn's guest. This was essential. Still Johannes had to think of his daughter's reputation . . . he could not bring even so celebrated an idealist to his home without observing the proprieties.

"Anita," he said, "you must put the maids on

preparing the front spare room for Mr. Huysmans."

Her face lighted up. "Are you asking him to stay with us?"

"Of course." He saw that Anita was pleased, and this gave him pleasure. "We'll have to ask some lady as well though. I was thinking of inviting my cousin, poor Mrs. Viljoen. She is always stuck out there on her farm with only a few *bywoners* and the Kafirs."

"By all means, father, do so. We have plenty of room."

"You like Mrs. Viljoen, Anita?"

"I think so, father. We hardly know each other. Isn't she rather a mournful woman?"

"Nay, Anita. . . . She is a godly woman."

The truth was that the funeral of her husband had given Mrs. Viljoen an utterly false estimate of the importance of death in regard to life. She was a good soul, with few of the vanities of her sex, and with no arrogant purse-pride. She had existed solely as the helpmate of her husband, living in his shadow, content to obliterate herself utterly. And then he had died. Suddenly the poor weak soul found herself the centre of the entire little world in which she moved. Black-edged sympathy rained upon her; soft and godly words poured into her ears until she began to find a melancholy pleasure in her very grief. From that day death always appeared to her as the most important function of life. She retained her widow's weeds as long as she possibly could, and afterwards dressed severely in black.

Any funeral in the neighbourhood she attended eagerly. And when the Dutch papers came from Cape

Town and Bloemfontein her eyes travelled first to the "Deaths" and she at once passed on the news of anybody's demise, no matter how slightly she might have known the deceased person.

Such an obviously church-like woman Van Ryn was sure would not fail to please "our people" in Unionstad. Her visit to his house, at the same time as that of Huysmans, would be an excellent thing in every way—it would enable Mrs. Viljoen to live down the sin of her "khaki son"; it would bring Van Ryn into closer touch with her; it would provide Anita with a chaperone, and it would enable Van Ryn to observe exactly what were the prospects of a peaceful and dignified home with Mrs. Viljoen the step-mother of Anita.

* * * * *

Ever since his daughter had warned him against the Jews in general, and Schlimowitz in particular, Van Ryn had been waiting for an opportunity to come to a clearer understanding with his anti-Indian ally. He had made inquiries in the district, and there confirmed the conclusions arrived at by Anita after she had glanced into her father's ledger. Schlimowitz was undoubtedly buying far more produce on the farms than in the past, Boers on whose properties Van Ryn held mortgage bonds were even selling a considerable percentage to the Jew. Schlimowitz went out every week in a Cape cart and pair. He would pass through Unionstad, fire off a lot of jocular remarks and then go out to the district, leaving Van Ryn to decide the destinies of Europe and South Africa on the sugar-bags in the store. And although the Jew had found it necessary to borrow £500 at 8 per

cent. from Van Ryn for the purchase of Mahomet's *erf*, he inspired the Boers outside with enormous confidence by the large sack of gold which he carried. So that not only did they receive better prices for their stuff, but they were paid *kontant*, always a great thing to a Boer. If they sold to Van Ryn they had to wait until his agents in Cape Town or Johannesburg had cleared up their accounts—Schlimowitz had no agents; his representative outside was a sharp Jewish woman, bound to him by the bonds of future matrimony.

"Schlimowitz," said Van Ryn to the Jew next time they met, "what are you going to do with that *erf* when you kick the Indian off it?"

"Sell it," was the quick answer. "Vy?"

"I heard you were going to keep open the store for yourself."

"Ach—vat a foolishness. Who told you that, Oom?"

"Never mind," said Van Ryn. "But I'm glad you are going to sell the *erf* because I will buy it from you."

"All right . . . all right. As soon as I get transfer I'll sell it to you."

"Will you come and sign a little paper about it, Schlimowitz?"

"Don't you trust me, Oom?" asked the Hebrew with pain in his opulent voice, and reproach written all over his face.

"*Ja nie*, I trust you, but people say you are going to keep open the store."

"But I don't own the store, Mr. Van Ryn. The Indian will take away his tin *huisje* and stock."

"Not if he can sell to you."

"But, Meester Van Ryn . . . *mijnheer* . . . do you teenk I could do such ah teeng?"

Schlimowitz wailed as though in mortal agony at this mistrust from one he loved.

"Why don't you sign a paper, then, to sell me the *erf?*"

"Because it vouldn't be vise, Mr. Van Ryn. Suppose the 'Sappers' heard of it? They vould call you and me a pair of svindlers . . . vorking together. Take my advice, Oom, and take my vord also."

Van Ryn felt the veiled threat behind that disinterested counsel. He knew that he must now trust himself to the Jew, and hope for the best. Getting rid of a coolie might be a laudable act from a South African point of view, but the "Sappers" could distort his motives into a hideous shape if only they got hold of the details. And then there was always that *schelm* O'Flinnigan to be reckoned with.

In his heart Van Ryn believed that nothing was too dark or dirty for the proprietor of the *News* to deal in, if only he could extract some profit from it. For the Celtic character was as badly understood by him as the Saxon—he did not realize that the apparent dishonesty of O'Flinnigan was as a rule nothing but congenital contrariness.

"How about the Election, Schlimowitz?" asked Van Ryn.

"Vat Election?" The Jew quickly smothered his indiscreet lapse. "Oh . . . *the* Election . . . of course . . . it's going fine . . . *het gaat goed* . . . you'll beat the Sappers easily."

"Are you doing anything to help us?"

"Am I doing anything?" shouted Schlimowitz. "If the Sappers knew who was the man dat's getting the farmers to vote against them, they'd never sell me anoder ox or donkey as long as I live."

The truth was that Schlimowitz did not care a rap which side in the Town Council obtained the majority. Van Ryn's influence in the scheme to oust Mahomet would be valuable if his party had the voting power, but if the "Sappers" won, Schlimowitz thought that he could get his way even more readily by playing off one side against the other. What would be easier, for example, than to convince Van Ryn's opponents that the Indian must be refused a licence in order to throw his business into the hands of a strong white trader like the Jew? It was "heads I win and tails you lose" for Schlimowitz, and therefore he kept on good terms with both parties and took full advantage of their disunity to get the entire trade of the district into his hands.

He did not neglect to cultivate the acquaintance even of his prospective victim Mahomet, and whenever he was in Unionstad paid a visit to the Indian's *winkel* in order to become friendly. Something might go wrong, he thought, and make it necessary to do a deal on amicable terms. In any case Mahomet generally either bought something from the Jew or sold him a few goats or fowls acquired by barter in the location. Both dealers made a profit—it was only the unhappy owners of South Africa—to-day the Boers, to-morrow the British, the day after the Kafirs—who gained nothing. They were the eternal sponges, always to be squeezed dry by these superior traders from the east;

and they were happy in their ignominy—they hated nobody but each other and themselves.

* * * * *

Huysmans' coming was a great event. Long before the time for the train, swarms of "Nats" buzzed about the station-master, a sturdy unimaginative Scot, who had no visible political opinions and no enemies, save O'Flinnigan. And this animosity on the part of the Irishman was due (*a*) to the station-master's being too careful with his small salary to subscribe to the *News*, and (*b*) to his being a Scotsman.

O'Flinnigan's innate malignancy was indulged to the full at the expense of the station-master, for as the latter belonged to no political party and was the only Scot in Unionstad, he was fair game. It was easy to profess "the public interest" when publishing covert attacks on the "disgracefully slow delivery at the Goods Yard." Letters, too, were always appearing on "Slackness at the Booking Office," these being signed by "Pro Bono Publico" and "Paterfamilias." Everybody knew perfectly well that O'Flinnigan was the author of the epistles; but the Scot at whom they were aimed simply shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. Nevertheless he was only waiting for an opportunity to tell O'Flinnigan what he thought of him.

Of course the train was late on the eventful day when Huysmans arrived. The Nationalists did not mind—they were used to it—but O'Flinnigan became highly irritable, owing to the heat and the long distance from any place where whisky could be obtained. After twenty minutes waiting, he decided to walk into the dorp and get a drink; but the station-master

declared that he had no idea when the train would arrive. O'Flinnigan feared to miss Huysmans' arrival and could consequently not leave. His craving for alcohol tortured him, and the heat added keenly to his miseries. In a rage he rudely accosted the station-master before the platform full of people.

"Do ye mane to say ye can't tell us phwen the train'll be in?"

"I cannot."

"I never heard such a ting in arl me life," cried the wretched man. "It's rotten bad management, I carl it."

"All right," said the Scot. "Ask your friend 'Pro Bono Public House' to write a letter to the paper."

"Phwat do ye mane by dat?" blustered O'Flinnigan. "I'll write about this in me paaper to-morrow."

"That's right," was the retort. "With you it's always the same—either drink or ink—the two things you should leave alone."

A crowd which had gathered around burst into laughter. O'Flinnigan in his rage looked like collapsing with apoplexy, and just then the train was signalled.

In the rush that followed every one momentarily forgot the crushed newspaper proprietor, except himself. He, like a villain in a cheap drama, thought "my turn will come," but unlike the everyday villain reserved his revenge for the paper.

By what was generally regarded as a charming coincidence, Huysmans' compartment drew up directly before a bank of daisies which the station-master's children had spent six months training to spell the words, in both English and Afrikaans:

UNIONSTAD—WELCOME.

Johannes Van Ryn, with Anita and Maggie, greeted the guest of honour first; and behind them came Oosthuisen, Willem Achteruit and all the leading Nationalists. O'Flinnigan sulked in the rear—his day had been spoiled by the station-master's public reference to his weakness; and in consequence he was rude and aggressive when he addressed Huysmans.

Van Ryn wanted to present the local editor (whom he never failed to propitiate), but Huysmans earnestly engaged Anita in conversation, amid the nudgings and whisperings of the ladies. O'Flinnigan grew impatient; he tugged at the great man's sleeve and Huysmans looked round.

"Well," said O'Flinnigan, "phwat would you like me for to put in the paaper about your visit?"

Van Ryn saw Huysmans' look of annoyance and he tactfully said, "Mijnheer Huysmans, this is Mr. O'Flinnigan, editor of the *Unionstad News*."

The politician bowed. "I'd like for to get an interview wid you privately," said O'Flinnigan. "Would ye mind coming out of the sun."

His manner was curt and offensive.

"Mr. O'Flinnigan," replied Huysmans civilly, "when I have greeted the friends who are here to welcome me to Unionstad I shall be at your disposal."

If O'Flinnigan were merely the low class and corrupt fellow which people like Van Ryn believed him to be, he would have behaved differently from what he did. But he was a complex human organism, made up of many contradictory parts and incapable of being either analysed or understood. Owing to what had happened earlier, he hated everybody now on that platform—

Huysmans most of all. As the latter turned to Anita and thanked her for the suggestion to invite him there, O'Flinnigan revolved on his heel and hurried away. He saw the 'bus of the Masonic Hotel about to leave with a few visitors from the train. It would save him the cost of a cab-fare; he jumped up beside Jack De Kock the barman (who acted also as "runner"), and in this congenial company was driven back to Unionstad.

There, after a few whiskies, he sat down to write. First he ridiculed the arrival of Huysmans, jeered at the floral "welcome" grown by the station-master's children, and declared that this was "the manner in which public money is wasted by the Government officials at Unionstad." Then, more artfully, he took exception to such "political welcomes by Government station-masters," knowing that the heads of the S.A.R. would assume that the Scot had been slobbering over the Nationalists, and give him a severe reprimand for it, or worse. Once in this mood nothing could stop O'Flinnigan but the fear of personal violence. He was not very Irish so far as physical courage went, this being one of the many contradictions of his nature. But short of violence he would allow nothing to stand in the way of a glorious verbal revenge.

And so Huysmans came in for a full share of abuse, since he indirectly was the cause of all the trouble. As he completed each sheet O'Flinnigan flung it to the compositor working a few yards away. And having concocted a column, and "taken it out of" every one whom he disliked, he returned to the Masonic, and gradually drank himself into a better state of mind. In fact he wound up the day gloriously drunk; and

as the paper had to appear next morning, the " comp " read his own proofs, " put the paper to bed," and started the nigger running off that issue of the *Unionstad News*.

* * * * *

Meanwhile Huysmans was enjoying a head-raising reception at Van Ryn's. The house was thrown open to all of " our people," and from every part of the little dorp Nationalists came to welcome the great one of their race and belief. He was charming in his simplicity, away from the public platform, and the ladies in particular admired him.

" He's toch *so* nice, neh ! " said Mrs. Viljoen, who was already there.

" I knew they'd like him," replied Anita with happy pride.

Huysmans exhibited much pleasure in the society of Anita. Her common-sense was so evident, her sanity so great, that it amounted, in his opinion, to genius.

Van Ryn was happy too when Huysmans and Anita conversed. Apart from the future, he felt that already one aspect of the programme had been realized. " Our people " were noticeably more cordial to him, they probably felt they had done him a wrong to believe the rumour about Ned and Anita, and proceeded to right it by believing what they now all hoped for—an engagement between Jan Huysmans and her who had invited him to Unionstad.

In the glamour of the great speaker's visit Ned Oakley seemed to be entirely forgotten. He performed his daily drudgery at the store, and, when the shutters went up, withdrew inside to pore over the books, and

consider how to stave off what looked like a coming loss of many thousands of pounds to Anita's father.

And then, still thinking deeply, the young man walked home feeling tired and depressed.

CHAPTER VII

A POLITICAL RECEPTION

HAD O'Flinnigan not wound up the day intoxicated by alcohol he would have realized his over-indulgence in the other liquid, and revised certain harsh and dangerous statements when passing the proof-sheets. Thinking painfully about things when he awoke early next day, the editor said to himself, "I'd better go down and make a few slight alterations." It was a useful habit he had acquired, to sleep over his criticisms, and take out the prospective libels in the morning. As he lived over the "Editorial and Publishing Offices of the *Unionstad News*," in a hot room directly under a corrugated iron roof which inspired some of his malice, it took very little time for him to reach "the works."

To his horror "the rag" was already printed. There it lay in a heap, minus a few papers for the post, which were folded, addressed and stamped. He snatched a copy from the top of the flat pile and began to read. Holy Moses, whatever had he been up to, to say that?

He read on—it was damnably good stuff, yes . . . *damnably*. He feared that it would damn him for ever if the article went out like that. The assistant came in. "I'm sorry I'm a little late, Mr. O'Flinnigan; you see I didn't get away from here till after twelve o'clock last night."

O'Flinnigan growled—he always growled when in the wrong—

"Phwy did ye run the paper arf?"

"You told me to, Mr. O'Flinnigan."

"Did I? Well, there's a bad mistake in it. . . . You'll have to do it over again."

"My Gord, Mr. O'Flinnigan," cried the "comp," —"there's no more paper."

"Phwat?"

"It's true . . . the railway keeps us waiting so long for our bales."

O'Flinnigan's brain first reeled and then revolved rapidly. He looked at the article again—it was certainly fine stuff . . . it would have been a great pity not to print it, even if there had been paper enough for another 1,200 copies.

Suddenly he noticed that there was a wide margin between the headlines and the beginning of the matter. Sitting down he wrote:

CONTRIBUTED BY "SAPPER"

We take no responsibility for the opinions of our contributor in this purely satirical article.—*Editor U.N.*

"Here," he bawled to the astounded printer, "set that up small to go between the headlines and the story. Then stick it with the hand-press."

* * * * *

The paper that day came out late.

O'Flinnigan, when he saw the first copies leave the office, retired to his room above, and there in the blistering heat expiated the sin of saying what he thought

of people who were too powerful to offend. He knew from past experience, which was far more valuable than psychology, that the first hours following publication were the most dangerous. If nobody assaulted him immediately after "Sapper's" article, he would escape. In the first paroxysm of rage, indignant readers, like jealous lovers, often longed to assuage their anger by physical violence. But afterwards it would pass. . . . In his scorching room, pestered by flies, with a bottle of whisky, the wretched man spent the afternoon. He had locked up the place and told his assistant to say he was out of town; the "cropper," printing labels, made music with the creak of the weather-cock overhead. . . .

It was a great pity he had ever gone to the station . . . all his troubles came from that Scotch brute, who would most probably refuse even to buy a paper and read what was printed about him.

O'Flinnigan now said to himself that he had never meant to attack the Nationalists. Damn it all, he really preferred them to the "Sappers." They were against England—so was he. They looked at Scotsmen and Englishmen in one light—so did he! Moreover, how could the *Unionstad News* take sides like this, in a matter purely municipal? It was not right, it was not wise, it would be unprofitable.

O'Flinnigan before that fatal journey to the station had intended to ride a very high and judicial horse over the elections, expressing no opinions, and publishing impartially both sides' manifestoes—at advertisement rates. Now it would look as though he was "up against" the Nationalists. And all because of that Scotch station-master, curse him!

In this way he went on analysing conditions for hours. Every now and then he tossed off a glass of whisky and water . . . gradually his difficulties began to vanish. If only they left him in peace until the next issue it would be all right. He could publish something "humorous" at the expense of the "Sappers" and sign it "Nat."

As for any offence that might have been given by the sarcastic allusions to Jan Huysmans—well, he could get over that by working "applause" everywhere into the report of his speech—not yet delivered—and show that (no matter what "Sapper" might think) the *Unionstad News* respected the great Nationalist.

Huysmans proved how little there was petty in his nature long before O'Flinnigan had had the opportunity to abase himself in the next issue.

When the jeering contribution signed "Sapper" appeared, Van Ryn, Oosthuisen and the others were furious. They held an informal meeting in the store and decided to visit O'Flinnigan in force and *spel op sijn donder*, or, in plain English, to give him a first-class hiding. Each of them knew perfectly well who "Sapper" was, and all felt that the coarse attack on their distinguished visitor was due entirely to the snub which O'Flinnigan had received on the station. Huysmans alone saved the unhappy editor from the reward of his dishonest indiscretion. When he heard from Anita that people were highly indignant, he merely laughed and went to Van Ryn, and the others. "Surely you are not going to bother about a silly trifle like this?"

"Scandalous, scandalous," cried Van Ryn. "This *schelm* thinks he can smear us with his dirty ink . . .

make fools of us for the ' Sappers ' to laugh at ! Just read it. . . . Look here ! "

Van Ryn, like most of the Boers, had a sense of fun but no sense of humour—Huysmans was too severe for fun, but possessed an acute sense of humour. He went through the article with Van Ryn and time after time roared with laughter.

" Ach, Johannes," he said, " it's the funniest thing I've read for a long time."

" Funny ? "

" Yes . . . the poor station-master's flowers with a ' welcome ' that took six months to grow, and I only got your invitation last week ! Don't you see how funny it is ? "

Oosthuisen looked at Achteruit and then at Van Ryn. Surely this was a new way to regard it. Huysmans continued : " Can't you see that the *arme kerel* was hot and uncomfortable when he wrote ? I was a reporter on a paper once—it's not always a nice job . . . sometimes I wrote spitefully too, and afterwards felt ashamed of it. Just leave the Irishman alone . . . next week perhaps he'll besmear the ' Sappers.' In any case he can only do the cause good . . . such lies will draw our people together."

And so O'Flinnigan escaped.

Huysmans' meeting was fixed for the following night in the Town Hall. Already the dorp was crowded, as though for Nachtmaal (Holy Communion). Boers came in from over a hundred miles to hear the speech. Most of them were always ready to give up a few days for a political meeting, and this one was exceptional because of Huysmans, though in connection with a municipal election that affected merely the dorp and

its immediate environs. The hotels were crowded, carts and wagons were laagered on the Market Square.

Business at Van Ryn's store consequently experienced a slight boom. The Nationalists were morally bound to go to the local leader of their party for what they required, and Ned Oakley was occupied during every minute of the day. Trade would have been even better had Van Ryn the time to attend to business, but with 'all these political duties, entertaining, etc,, he could give little thought to the store. And with all the good-will in the world Ned could attend to only one customer at a time. So after waiting a long while to be served, some of the Boers would take the opportunity to steal away to the Coolie and buy goods. Thus they were taught the joys of cheap and fawning Orientalism, The memory of Mahomet's low prices tempted them back, and secretly they committed the sin of race treachery, and momentarily profited by it, with the result that the political boom created by the coming of Jan Huysmans in the end reacted adversely on Van Ryn's business.

* * * * *

By the next week it was generally accepted in Unionstad that Anita and Huysmans would make a match of it. People said that probably she had been flirting a little with her father's assistant who was a good-looking young fellow, and more suited to while away the time with than a "Jong" like Gerard Achteruit. Huysmans was something far different, obviously, and Van Ryn would doubtless encourage such a suitor for his daughter's hand. His pleasure at Anita's open admiration of the great man was visible to all; and he spoke of it as he fondly believed it to be

—the ordinary attraction of man for woman and woman for man. Anita's straightforward declaration that Ned Oakley had never manifested any admiration of this kind, reassured her father on that side; and to give the final blow to any lingering hopes or longings Van Ryn made a point of speaking openly to his manager about Huysmans and Anita. Ned listened in silence. He had felt something of the kind already—it was in the air of Unionstad. Customers talked to him of it, some to annoy, others to find out the truth. All day long Huysmans was dinned into his ears, privately, politically and commercially. Even young Achteruit came to the store and endeavoured to get even for his own obliteration by rubbing it into Ned.

At last Anita herself came. She was with Huysmans. "Mr. Oakley," she gaily cried on entering, "may I show Mr. Huysmans over the store?"

"Certainly, Miss Van Ryn."

"You haven't met each other—have you? Mr. Huysmans is our great Dutch speaker; a man of whom we hope big things one day."

Ned as he went forward to take Huysmans' proffered hand said: "Is it he of whom you once spoke to me, Miss Van Ryn?"

"I don't know," she answered. "Perhaps."

"What is it, Mr. Oakley?" asked Huysmans, looking at the young pair alternately.

"Don't tell him, don't tell him," laughed Anita. "You'll make him conceited—it would be a pity—he's still so unaffected, for a public speaker."

Huysmans smiled. "Perhaps that's the greatest of my affectations. We all have some pose . . . perhaps simplicity is mine."

"I don't think so," she answered rather gravely.

Ned noted this attitude of mind. It gave him something like a sharp twinge of physical pain. How frankly Anita admired Huysmans. She was always frank. That was the worst of it, he thought. Anita made no use of coquetry. If she showed admiration for Huysmans it meant that she admired him; she was so cruelly sincere. As the pair went round the rambling store, Ned's thoughts travelled involuntarily to the *voorkamer* at Van Ryn's, and he visualized young Achteruit coldly received by Anita, ridiculed by Maggie. He felt almost sympathy with the poor wretch. As superior to Gerard as he felt by outlook on life and education, so he now felt his inferiority to Huysmans, who bore the stamp of a powerful personality, and whose simplest phrases were uttered with an authority which nobody could question.

As Anita and Huysmans passed through on their return to the street, Ned was weighing some Boer meal for a *bywoner*. Anita stopped before him and said: "If you are not otherwise engaged this evening, Mr. Oakley, won't you come up to see us?"

Ned looked sharply at her . . . but knew that he was wrong as he did so. No, Anita never patronized people. Nevertheless he felt a dull spiritual pain, a feeling as though he were some stricken animal longing to creep into a hole and suffer unseen. In a gloomy determined way he answered her. "I'm sorry . . . I shall not be free this evening. Thank you, though."

"Working again on the books?"

"Yes," he said for want of a better explanation.

"Well, leave the books for once. . . . You haven't

been to see us for a long time. . . . Say you'll come—now don't be unsociable. Mr. Huysmans is our guest, and I want all our friends to be there to make him feel welcome to Unionstad."

"That's a good reason why I shouldn't be there, isn't it?" said Ned, a little harshly.

She looked at him. "Why?"

"Oh . . . well . . . political reasons."

"Political reasons? Oh, I see . . . you're afraid you'll be taken for a Nationalist?" She was scoffing now. "Mr. Huysmans," she called out.

"I'm not afraid of that," said Ned. "I was afraid your people—*ons mense*—would not like meeting me there."

She turned to Huysmans. "Give us your opinion, please. I want Mr. Oakley to come to our house to-night to welcome you to Unionstad. Because he is not of our party he is afraid he won't be welcome."

"So far as I am concerned," said Huysmans, "I should feel personally slighted if you do *not* come."

Ned admired the way this man so readily found the right thing to say.

"There now," exclaimed Anita, "you must come. I too will be offended if you don't."

She held out her hand. Mechanically Ned returned the cordial pressure, bowed to Huysmans, and returned to weigh the Boer meal as they went out of the store.

* * * * *

Next to Huysmans the most important individual at Van Ryn's house that night was the Rev. Paulus Nicholas Justus Van Heerden, local representative of the Dutch Reformed Church, and generally known as the Predikant. His position in Unionstad not

only commanded the respect inspired by a man of God, but it had all the weight as well of a temporal power that was largely political. In short, the Predikant added one striking parallel to the many which could be drawn between the land of O'Flinnigan's birth and that of his adoption.

No priest in Ireland wielded more influence, except where the ignorance of his parishioners was greater. Considering the social class and wealth of the average citizen of Unionstad, the Predikant was every bit as potent as the Priest. It was a fact that O'Flinnigan frequently deplored when chatting to Jack De Kock, the barman of the Masonic; though he never referred to the subject in his paper, for the good reason that he had not left Ireland until after the age of adolescence. But in private he sneered at "*Mijnheer the Predikant*" with the accent on the "Cant"—and afterwards clandestinely crossed himself, lest there be some generic connection between his priest and this one.

It was hardly clear whether the Rev. Mr. Van Heerden was present to greet Huysmans in his private or official capacity. As a man of God he had the right to appear in any place where order and decency reigned. So far as political significance being attached to his appearance at Van Ryn's he was indifferent. For the Predikant represented "Sappers" as well as Nationalists, and the only other races in Unionstad were religiously beyond the pale. First came the Scotch, represented by the station-master; second, the Irish, represented by O'Flinnigan; third, the English; and fourth, the "*swart goed*" or Kafirs and coloured races generally.

The station-master attended the English Church,

that is when the train arrivals did not clash with the services; O'Flinnigan had no need of Mass, and as for Confession . . . well, he brought his paper out every week regularly.

The Predikant was not concerned with the *swart goed*, or coloured people—one of his deacons looked after a corrugated iron chapel which had been erected for them near the Location. So far as the Dutch Reformed Church in Unionstad was concerned, black or chocolate-coloured *skepsels* were not admitted at all. In fact they knew better than to try to pray to the white men's God in the white man's *Kerk*.

The Rev. Mr. Van Heerden prided himself on excluding politics from his sphere. No, he would take no sides. Only that day a farmer named Broekstap had gone to him and said: "Mijnheer, for whom must I vote?"

"Nay, nay," replied the Predikant, "you mustn't come to me. If you don't know your duty, so much the worse for you when you die."

"But, mijnheer, I want to do my duty. Must I vote for the 'Sappers'?"

The Predikant was furious, any one could see that by his face. "Go away," he cried, "go away. I'm ashamed to have you in my congregation."

"Then, mijnheer," whined Broekstap, "I will *stem* for the Nationalisten."

The Rev. Mr. Van Heerden's face may have shown his joy in the presence of the repentant sinner, but he would not advise the man! No, no, he was a servant of the Lord—not a political agent

To-night he was in his element, surrounded by the ladies; smiling, amiable, commanding. To Huysmans

he spoke only reverberant High Dutch; and with the attitude of a benevolent school-master gently chided Mrs. Viljoen for some particularly bad lapse into the Taal. But Anita knew that the poor little widow from the farm had difficulty in maintaining conversation at the level of the pulpit, and she made a point of speaking Afrikaans. She believed in elevating the language of her people, but knew that many of the Boers could not and would not abandon the simplicity of their taal for the inflected Hollandsch.

"Why are you speaking *so plat*, Miss Van Ryn?" asked the Predikant. "You are one of our people best able to set the good example."

Anita concealed the charity of her motive. Besides, she thought the Rev. Mr. Van Heerden was rather pompous. This annoyed her. "Language grows like men, *mijnheer*," she replied. "When you take people to another country they change, so should language."

"Then you advocate teaching the Taal instead of High Dutch?"

"No . . . but we must not be pedantic."

Huysmans agreed with her. He said, "Some of our teachers wish to go too far. The Dutch language of South Africa will never again be the Dutch of Holland. Conditions make it impossible."

Since both he and Anita spoke High Dutch more elegantly than the Predikant did, their views created an impression upon the listeners and the subject was warmly debated.

At this point Ned Oakley entered the room. His coming created quite a little stir. Both Maggie and Anita ran to greet him—the younger girl, too, liked Ned very much; she refrained even from trying to

find a ridiculous side to his nature, and had she lighted unconsciously upon one would not have availed herself of it for the purposes of mockery.

Van Ryn made his assistant quite as welcome as Anita did. Always hospitable and free from that false pride which so often obsesses prosperous men in Europe, he was really pleased to see Ned in his home. The wagging tongues of Unionstad no longer threatened his election; and for Ned, in consequence, he felt almost affection.

Huysmans, Oakley and Anita formed a group in one corner of the room. On the *stoep*, under the clusters of white and purple grapes, were chairs. It was a very hot night. The cicalas were overpowering a solitary cricket by the shrill continuity of their cry; from the pear trees in the side garden came the delicate fragrance of Spanish flies on a soft balmy breeze. Moon-flowers added their heavy perfume to the air.

"Let us go outside," said Anita. "We can talk better there." She had not noticed her father come up to Ned, as she stepped towards the door, followed by Huysmans. Looking round, Ned saw them going out to sit beneath the vines. Again that dull pain shot through him—it was clear that Anita wanted to be alone with Huysmans. And as she stood at the door waiting for him to come, Ned and her father crossed the room to where Maggie and the Predikant partook of coffee and cake.

"Where is Anita?"

Ned did not reply, but sombrely greeted the reverend gentleman instead. "Anita is on the *stoep* with Huysmans, Maggie," replied Van Ryn. Then he looked

knowingly at Ned and with intention said: "I think we had better not disturb them, hey?"

Maggie, with a delicate feminine perception, added: "No . . . I expect they are talking about the future of United South Africa again." And she gave Ned a meaning glance which any one else would have understood.

The Predikant made a priestly show of friendliness towards the *Engelsman*, for whom there was always the hope of salvation, because it was in his power to poll for the right candidates. After all, Oakley took Van Ryn's salary, and it was only reasonable to expect that he would vote for the party which gave him his living. This was the Predikant's view. He therefore engaged the young man in conversation—without any great finesse, particularly as Ned was not a member of his congregation and could not call him to account.

"What do you think of the Elections, Oakley?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "I can't say that I've thought about them, Mr. Van Heerden."

"Hum . . . why is that, young man?"

"Been too busy." He resented this ponderous assumption of authority.

"One should never be too busy to think about exercising one's vote. It is every man's duty."

The Predikant was somewhat severe in his tone.

"I think it's even more every man's duty to work and earn his living."

"Yes, that is perhaps so," pursued the Predikant, who felt that this young man, like all his race, was full of arrogance. "But the vote is a great privilege; next to man's skin and the recognition of God, it is what chiefly distinguishes him from the Kafirs. And every

one should take a pride in considering carefully whom he will record his vote for."

Ned made no reply.

"I hope you have done so, Oakley?"

"No, I haven't," answered Ned.

"Tch, tch . . . that is bad," said the Predikant. "Why have you not thought upon this subject?"

"Because I am not going to vote."

"What! You are not going to vote?"

"I don't see that it can be of the slightest use."

"You mean to say that you will not take the trouble to go to the Town Hall and vote for Mr. Van Ryn, who employs you?"

"Mr. Van Ryn doesn't employ my vote."

The Predikant by now was so angry that he forgot altogether his usual attitude of neutrality in politics. Almost heatedly he cried: "Why are you not going to vote for your employer?"

"I don't like some of the others on his ticket. They say 'Plump for the Afrikander ticket.'"

"You don't like Mr. Oosthuisen and Mr. Achteruit?"

"Not particularly. Apart from wasting my time in the store, they're too full of racialism for me."

"Ah, I see," said the Predikant; "you think they should be grateful and affectionate because your people took their country from them?"

"Not at all." Ned spoke in a tone that matched the Minister's. "But I can't see the use of hanging out a German flag to celebrate the taking of Antwerp from the Belgians, who are every bit as Dutch as Achteruit and Oosthuisen."

The Rev. Mr. Van Heerden realized that not only

was the discussion becoming heated, but that he was getting the worst of it. He endeavoured therefore to change the subject. But Ned Oakley, deep down, was very like his father. When once the combativeness within him had been aroused, he would not leave off until either victorious or vanquished. "I'm surprised, Mr. Van Heerden," he continued, "that you should take such an active part in politics—in my opinion it is utterly wrong."

"Wrong . . . Wrong?" The Predikant was ponderously on the defence. "Why?"

"Because you are a minister of religion and your functions are non-political."

At this point Anita and Huysmans returned to the room, Maggie having told her sister that Ned was arguing angrily with the Predikant. Anita caught the end of Ned's phrase.

"You forget, Mr. Oakley," she said with a laugh, "that politics *is* the religion of the Afrikanders."

Huysmans laughed jovially too, and the discussion, which had seemed likely to become more than acrimonious, ended without any further exchange of compliments. But the Minister did not forget young Oakley's criticisms of his conduct, and later on he expressed to Van Ryn his annoyance at meeting "a khaki" there and being spoken to in a manner that was unprecedented for a Predikant.

The host naturally felt upset, particularly as the offender was his assistant. He begged of Mijnheer to overlook the incident.

"Oakley," he explained, "is plain in his speech, but he's a good fellow at heart, and worth twice what I pay him."

"*Ja*, Johannes," said the Predikant as Van Ryn took his arm and they walked on the *stoep*. "That may be so, but it is not a personal apology I want. I am above such pettiness—but the cloth has been insulted. I stand for the dignity of the Church. Besides, Oakley refuses to *stem* for our candidates."

And he re-told some of the argument, and in the re-telling Ned's remarks lost nothing of their original force. Van Ryn promised to have a serious talk with the young man in the morning, to induce him to recant and apologize. On these conditions the Predikant agreed to stay for another half hour. But Van Ryn was sorely troubled—Ned's contract was on the point of expiry, and he had not yet agreed to stay on. In the circumstances how could he ask him to apologize ?

"Why did you argue with him ?" asked Anita of Ned, who made no reply. "You can't talk of the Afrikanders' love of politics after this. Now look here, I wanted you particularly to know Mr. Huysmans better, that was why I asked you to come out on the *stoep* where we could talk quietly."

He looked at her sharply. Not having heard her invitation to him on leaving the room, Ned now wondered why she said this. Of course it could only be to spare his feelings over her going away with the other man like that. He acquitted her of wilful deceit, but he wished she would not speak of Huysmans all the time. There was surely no need to parade her pleasure so. Everybody knew that she was in love with Huysmans and he with her. Ned did not blame her. Apart from his mental gifts, his future, and his open admiration of Anita, Huysmans was a splendid-

looking man. Ned admitted all this to his suffering, tortured self. He was not conceited or the ephemeral pangs of wounded vanity would soon have passed and left him as buoyant as before. But his feelings for Anita were so deep and sincere that he had never dared to probe into himself and analyse them. Had he loved her less he could more easily have revealed himself to himself . . . and to her. Now it was too late. . . .

As swiftly as the thoughts in a dream, all this flashed through his mind while she spoke. He saw Huysmans looking at him rather strangely, and then heard Anita's voice:

"Instead of making friends with Mr. Huysmans you have quarrelled with the Predikant. Is that how you fight racialism, Mr. Oakley? Really you are as bad as some of my own people!" And she laughed merrily.

"What was it you fell out with Mr. Van Heerden about?" asked Huysmans in a most friendly way.

Despite his inward feelings, Ned could not find the ungraciousness to reply in the manner he longed to. The charm of the man was too overpowering. In a few words he explained what had occurred.

"I think you were quite right," said Huysmans sincerely. "I have always objected strongly to Predikants participating in politics. But your clergymen do the same . . . it is noticed less because the Boers are a more religious people than yours, and they obey the Predikants. But the offence is the same on both sides."

Ned admitted that Huysmans was right.

"Both your people and mine are intolerant races,"

proceeded the Nationalist. "In America, where I have recently been, they look upon the English as an old-fashioned, conservative, bigoted and out-of-date nation—just as the English look upon us Boers. Nations a few years ahead of others are always inclined to be arrogant, like children of sixteen years old when they meet youngsters of twelve. Englishmen go abroad with all their habits, and want the world to adopt them. They have taught our Kafirs to wear black suits and Jaeger wool, instead of themselves copying the semi-nude comfort of the natives. In Liberia, at the Equator, the negroes wear stiff collars and top-hats!"

Huysmans was warming up now—Anita looked at him with a sparkle in her eye. He proceeded: "Your people come into this country, after the Dutch, and they find wine which has been made by the Boers. If it is sweet they call it 'Port,' if it is sour they call it 'St. Julien'—it is neither. But it does not occur to them to give African names—they see everything in relation to themselves. They find a berry which bears a faint resemblance to a European gooseberry, they call it 'Cape gooseberry.' They send the wines and jams to Europe by these names—nobody will touch them. Why? Because the 'port' isn't port and the 'gooseberries' aren't gooseberries. And in the end the poor South African has to suffer for your colossal race egotism."

"How does he suffer?" asked Ned in a challenging voice.

"Well," interrupted Anita, "if he could wear a *moocha* (loincloth) instead of a thick suit on a day like this, wouldn't he be better off?"

She was on the watch perpetually, and at the least sight of temper would tactfully veer the conversation towards a lighter side. As Huysmans was laughing at her remark, she turned to Ned and said in the Taal : "Don't be so *kwaai* (angry) ! He is not at all one of those Boers we read of in novels who go about with Mausers looking for Englishmen. Are you, Mr. Huysmans ? "

"No, I'm not. I want them on my side. Without everybody's help our country will never be anything. And if an Englishman is ready to become a South African, I would be a short-sighted fool not to welcome him."

"But," said Ned, his secret sorrow embittering his tongue, "your party want none but the Dutch. I am not an *oprecht* Afrikander. I am only born and bred here, and privileged to fight for South Africa ! I only speak English, Dutch and Kafir, whereas the true Afrikander has the advantage of not speaking anything but his own Taal ! "

Huysmans stepped forward and placed his hand upon Ned's shoulder.

"Now you are talking like some of our back-veld Boers," he said. "Poor *bywoners* brought up without education or books. You haven't their excuse, Mr. Oakley."

The young man was silent. He had not expected to hear the Nationalist talk to him in this way. It was incomprehensible. People had always led him to believe that Huysmans was bitterly anti-English.

"I thought you advocated a United States of South Africa in which the English would play no part," he said.

"My ideal," replied Huysmans, "is a United South Africa in which nobody shall play a part except South Africans."

"But you believe in the Dutch language and not English."

"Every man believes in his own mother, his own father, his own food, and his own language."

"You wish to suppress the English language in South Africa," persisted the boy.

"I wish we could," he frankly said, "because two languages will always keep a country back, but we cannot . . . any more than the English can suppress Dutch."

"And the end of it all, Mr. Huysmans?"

"An Anglo-Dutch language for South Africa, just as Anglo-Saxon and French to-day is the language of England. English and Dutch are sister tongues—they come from the same part of the world originally, and will be re-welded together here in South Africa. That is not my wish, but it is my prophecy."

As Ned stood silent, not knowing how to express his surprise at Huysmans' views, so different from what he had expected, Anita said, "I hope you understand each other's national characters better now."

"Mr. Huysmans' precepts and the Predikant's practice don't quite square," Ned remarked.

"Nor do your father's and yours," retorted she.

"No, no, Miss Van Ryn, let me be quite frank," interrupted the politician, "I have modified my views considerably since"—he looked gravely at her—"since I came to Unionstad."

"Well, good night," said Ned rather curtly. "Thank you for asking me to come, Miss Van Ryn,"

"Surely you're not going yet?"

"I must. Sorry I can't stay. Good night, Mr. Huysmans."

"Good night, Mr. Oakley."

"I hope you will meet again and study the race problem through each other," said Anita.

"I shall be delighted," was Huysmans' cordial acceptance. Ned was more reserved. He was not only English but at the moment jealous. "If you are interested in *stoep* politics," he answered, "come to the store and join the Parliament there. . . . Miss Van Ryn will tell you all about it. Good night."

Huysmans held out his hand and Ned took it. Anita watched the two men closely.

"Are you coming to the Town Hall to-morrow night?" asked Huysmans.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Anita, "you'll come with us and hear Mr. Huysmans speak, won't you?"

"Sorry," was the boy's answer. "I shall be getting out the accounts."

Then he turned quickly on his heel, and left the house.

* * * * *

"Why did Oakley clear off in such a hurry?" asked Van Ryn of Anita.

"I don't know, father. Why did the Predikant?"

"Ah, that's it, is it? Now, what does Oakley want to go quarrelling with our Minister for? Just look at the trouble he gives me. If he wants to come and talk to the Predikant like a British officer to a Tommy . . . he might just as well have stopped away."

"He didn't want to come. I pressed him to."

"Why don't you leave such matters to me, Anita?

It was foolish to bring Oakley here to-night—women can never understand these things ! "

" What things, father ? "

" Political things. Now I'll have to fall out with the Predikant perhaps, or else I must lose Oakley from the store."

He explained fully why.

" What right has Mr. Van Heerden to dictate to you in connection with your business ? " Anita spoke sharply. " It's just like him to ask *you* to get Oakley to apologize. He'll certainly do nothing of the kind."

" Ach," said Van Ryn, " what's an old apology then ! He can just say ' sorry '—the English say ' sorry ' all day long. They walk on your feet and they knock you down, or they kill you and take your country, and they say ' sorry,' just as if they play tennis."

" Yes," she replied, " they say ' sorry ' when it pleases them, they say it when you don't ask for it or want it—but they never say it when you want them to. Oakley won't say it."

" Oh, yes, he will, Anita—to please me. I'll ask him to."

" Then I'll tell him not to, father ! "

" Anita . . . what do you say ? "

" I'm not going to let him apologize to Mr. Van Heerden . . . it's not right."

" But what have you got to do with it, Anita ? This is no affair of yours."

" As much mine, father, as yours. Let the Predikant fight out his own battles with Oakley."

" But, Anita, my child, don't you see how this bothers me . . . the Election is on Thursday. If the

Predikant doesn't get satisfaction he can turn everything upside down . . . the 'Sappers' will then surely get a majority."

"Well . . . supposing they do?" she asked. "Wouldn't you sooner that, than do a mean thing to please the Predikant?"

"But you don't understand, Anita . . . if we are beaten on Thursday, the 'Sappers' will play *baas* in the Council for three years perhaps."

"But you'll be *baas* in your own business, father, and feel master of yourself and your actions too."

Van Ryn said no more. What was the use of trying to reason with such a girl? He could not explain to her how matters stood in regard to Schlimowitz, the Indian and the store. She would not either sympathize with him or help him; she would not understand. She was so idealistic in her thoughts, not at all practical. That was the result of these highclass educations. Now a woman like Mrs. Viljoen would be different.

And by the way, how about Mrs. Viljoen? He was forgetting her, losing sight of his reasons for inviting her to stay with them. Unconsciously he looked about the room and saw the widow of his carefully calculated dreams. She was helping Maggie to hand jellies and custards to the ladies gathered round a long table in the corner. Johannes looked approvingly at her; she was certainly an attractive woman, nobody could say a word against either her character or her deportment. Dressed sombrely in black, she nevertheless looked extremely young and her manner of eating custard was irreproachable.

Very little had been said by the *dames* of Unionstad

about Mrs. Viljoen's khaki son. It was an unfortunate blot on an upright agricultural career, they thought, but it could be overlooked if the lady became Mrs. Van Ryn, the Mayoress. Achteruit had spoken to his wife of this possibility which existed in regard to Van Ryn's future. If the Nationalists obtained the majority. Johannes would have to marry. He had been on terms of close friendship with Mrs. Viljoen for a long time . . . why not?

"Why not, indeed?" asked Mrs. Achteruit. "She is a very upright woman . . . never wears less than three petticoats! Not like Anita Van Ryn, who is shameless enough to go about with only one petticoat under her skirt."

These feminine mysteries did not greatly concern Achteruit, who was unlike his son and had not troubled, in the whole of his married life, to observe even how many petticoats his own wife wore. But the widow was a fine woman, not at all thin, and on her farm she had 16,000 sheep, apart from anything else. Yes . . . he would suggest it to Van Ryn, and thus be brought into closer contact with him than ever. Perhaps later on he would benefit by it. For even if Anita were going to marry Huysmans, as now seemed probable, Achteruit still wanted a good situation for his son Gerard. He approached Van Ryn.

Ned's trouble with the Predikant was, of course, well known to Achteruit. He had not been far away, and what he failed to hear he readily invented. Oh, such terrible remarks, so disrespectful, so unrighteous! What were they coming to in Unionstad when young people (Rooineks too!) dared to address Ministers of our Lord like that!

"Ach, Johannes, it is awful, awful! You must give Oakley the sack now, or lose the support of all our people."

"*Hou jou smoel wat!*" (shut your mouth), said Van Ryn, rudely and angrily. "Hardly any one heard Oakley—it is very much exaggerated." But he led Achteruit into the garden and talked with him behind the quince hedge until Mrs. Achteruit called out that it was time to go home.

Nearly all the guests were leaving—Cape carts were drawn up outside from which people who lived beyond the dorp leaned out and called parting "good nights." They all promised to see each other again at the Town Hall next evening. The general opinion was that Huysmans was a splendid fellow, though over-educated for some of them.

As for the reception, it had been a great success, except for that incident between the Predikant and Oakley. But there, what could one expect from an *Engelsman*, even when he was born in South Africa and spoke the Taal? At all events there was no longer any thought of an affair between Anita and him. Anyone could see that.

"Good night, Fredericka," said Van Ryn to Mrs. Viljoen as she stood in the passage before retiring. The prospective Mayor looked at the potential Mayoress with affection, almost tenderness. She was so surprised . . . it was the first time he had spoken to her like that . . . She dropped her eyes. "Good night, Johannes."

And as she placed her hand upon the knob of her door he softly called "*Slaap gerust*" (Sleep well). When she lighted the candle on her dressing table the

widow's cheeks felt as though they were ablaze.

She held up the little light beside her face, and looked in the glass. Yes . . . she was red all over. And now, for the first time since the death of her husband, Mrs. Viljoen gazed critically and femininely at herself. And she saw that she was still comely, still much as she looked in that photograph which had been taken of her . . . many years ago. And she went to sleep peacefully . . . contentedly, like a child who has been promised an outing on the next day.

CHAPTER VIII

"But the veld, my veld
Is more than any church, more vastly still
Than grey cathedrals drowsing down the years."
—*Perceval Gibbon.*

VAN RYN hurried to the store next morning. His ill-humour of the previous night had vanished in the passage—he determined to speak to Ned while he felt happy and persuasive. It would not do to use force or threats. Oakley must make peace with the Predikant for the sake of Van Ryn and the business. So much depended on the Election and the removal of Mahomet.

When Van Ryn reached the store Ned was already there off-loading a wagonful of *mealies*. He did not appear in any too amiable a mood—the "good morning" he gave resembled defiance more than a greeting or welcome. Van Ryn, in consequence, did not immediately touch on the subject that tormented him. He made several good-natured remarks, and gradually won his assistant over; as, with bits of meat, one persuades a hostile dog to wag his tail. At length they entered the office, the books were opened, and with it the eternal subject of bad business. This was Van Ryn's opportunity.

"Oakley," he said, "I'm sorry you had that row last night with Mr. Van Heerden. Predikants are so touchy . . . you know. He blames me for it, of course."

"How can he do that? I can surely say what I

think, without it's being anybody's concern but my own ? "

" No, no, Oakley, you can't—don't you see, I am like a father to you. You angered the Predikant in my house . . . you are in my business—he will never forgive me for what you said to him."

" I'm sorry," said Ned sincerely. " If I'd thought of that at the time, I might have controlled myself better."

" Well, that's all right, Ned "—it was rarely he called him Ned—" I'm not blaming you so much, but you know what it is, *neh* ? Now just go along to Mr. Van Heerden before he leaves the house and explain, hey ? Say you're sorry . . . you didn't mean it."

" But I did mean it, Mr. Van Ryn. No, I'm damned if I'm going to apologize."

" Ach, Oakley, don't be so *hoogmoedig*—you're not going to apologize—you're just going to say you're sorry. Come now . . . you'll do this for me, hey ? "

" What do you want me to say I'm sorry for ? "

" Nothing—just say you're sorry you spoke so rough."

Ned sincerely liked Van Ryn. Often when things were going badly at the store he felt a sense of responsibility, almost of guilt, for having induced him to take over the store. He had no wish to have on his conscience the enmity of the Predikant towards his employer, though since parting from Anita on the previous night he had made up his mind to leave Unionstad as soon as somebody could be got from the coast to take his place. In Unionstad he knew there was nobody available who understood the business.

And Ned had no wish to leave Van Ryn in a hole. After a long fight with his pride he said, "All right . . . I'll go and tell the Predikant I'm sorry."

"*Allemach kerel*, that's good!" and the elder man warmly shook his hand.

As Ned later entered the gates of the Dutch Reformed Parsonage, he saw Achteruit hurrying by in a small entrance at the bank.

A coloured maid answered the bell. "The Predikant is in," she replied, "will the *baas* wait so long?"

Ned sat down in the passage on a comfortless, wooden-seated chair, of the kind so often used for religious purposes, perhaps to symbolize the rigid principles of the Church. The minute became a quarter of an hour, and Ned grew irritated by what he began to feel was intentional discourtesy. He asked the maid again if she had told Mr. Van Heerden his name. She answered, "*ja baas.*"

Did this man imagine he was going to wait there all day, like a beggar for church alimony, or a penitent in quest of mercy? It was twenty-five minutes before the girl came along, just as he was leaving the house, to conduct him into the presence of the Predikant. He was now in a far from contrite frame of mind, which was not improved by the reverend gentleman's pretending first not to see him. "Good morning, Mr. Van Heerden—I came here half an hour ago to tell you I was sorry for what occurred last night. If my manner now isn't quite what it ought to be for the occasion, you must excuse that too."

The Predikant sat, pompous and pontifical, like a schoolmaster receiving a pupil guilty of misconduct. His elbows rested on the table, the fingers of both hands

were open and pressed together. Indicating a chair, he said, "Sit down, please."

"Sorry I can't stay much longer," was the reply. "If you don't mind, I'll stand."

"You said something about last night," continued the priest, speaking English heavily, as though it were High Dutch. "I suppose Mr. Van Ryn has spoken to you . . . is that why you have come to tender me an apology?"

Ned's muscles were quivering with anger. "I haven't come to apologize . . . I did nothing last night that I'm ashamed of, and certainly nothing that calls for an apology."

"Then why are you here?"

"I promised Mr. Van Ryn that I would express regret for what had occurred."

"But you do not consider you did anything wrong. You do not express any penitence. How, then, can I overlook it?"

"Overlook what?" asked Ned sharply. "I have not asked you to overlook anything."

"Very well, then—there is no more to be said. Mr. Van Ryn must now do what is necessary."

"Mr. Van Ryn—what has he to do with this?"

"Ah . . . you seem to be forgetting that you are in Mr. Van Ryn's employ, and that if I cannot exact obedience and repentance from you because you are not of my congregation—that your *baas* will."

"So that's what you're after, is it?" The young man's tone was defiant as the Predikant's was insulting. "You think that because I work for Mr. Van Ryn you can bully me into a cowardly apology?"

"Oakley," said the Predikant with all the relentless

cruelty of dogma, "I advise you to be humble and repent. If you apologize for the insult tendered me, if you withdraw the charge that I interfere in political matters and publish your denial in the *Unionstad News*, I will overlook the matter."

"And if I don't?"

"Influence will be brought to bear upon your employer to discharge you from your situation."

"And if Mr. Van Ryn refuses to be 'influenced'?"

"Then he will bring upon his own head the consequences of your unchristian behaviour."

"Well," said Ned, "that's settled it. Good morning."

As he was going out the Predikant called after him: "Mr. Attorney Aasvogel will draw up the apology in two languages—you will only have to sign it."

Having by now passed from anger to a condition of cold, steely resolution, Ned ironically replied: "I suppose I'll have to pay the costs, won't I?"

"That is understood," was the self-satisfied answer. It was the only part that the Predikant did understand.

When Ned reached the store, wet with the perspiration of a rapid walk into which his anger had dissolved, Van Ryn anxiously met him at the door. "Well," he said, "is it all right, hey?"

"Quite all right," replied the assistant.

Van Ryn had no wish to enlarge on the boy's humiliation; all he said was, "Ah, that's a good thing—I was very worried about it."

Then they settled down to the day's routine.

Going towards the Town Hall later to survey the arrangements for Huysmans' meeting, Van Ryn met Achteruit, who walked with him.

"Johannes," he said, "do you not think it would be better to sack Oakley on the spot than for him to publish his apology in the paper and draw everybody's attention to what happened in your house?"

"What apology are you talking about?"

Achteruit drew from his pocket a sheet of paper with the Parsonage's heading printed on it. "The Predikant told me to take this to Aasvogel," he said. Van Ryn read:

APOLOGY

I, the undersigned, Edward Oakley, of Unionstad (son of Thomas Oakley, Town Councillor), hereby *apologize*, humbly and sincerely, to Paulus Nicholas Justus Van Heerden, Minister in Holy Orders to the Dutch Reformed Church, Unionstad, for the *false*, *slanderous*, *lying* and *defamatory statements* publicly made by me the said Edward Oakley, last Tuesday the . . . . 1915 at the residence of Johannes Van Ryn, Esq., in the presence of several honourable witnesses. I hereby express my regret for my conduct and declare that the Reverend Paulus Nicholas Justus Van Heerden has never been guilty of abusing his Holy Office for the purpose of participating in politics, and I humbly tender this apology through the public press in consideration of his forgiveness to me for having cast upon his character these false, unfounded and slanderous aspersions. I agree to defray the cost of this advertisement, which will appear in both Dutch and English in two consecutive issues of the *Unionstad News*.

(Signed).....

"What the devil is all this *nuikerij* (tomfoolery)?" exclaimed Van Ryn. "You mean to tell me the Predikant wants that to go in the paper?"

"Oakley agreed to sign a public apology—that is the usual way those things are drawn up."

"Yes, I know . . . that is the ordinary apology in our country, but Oakley will never sign it."

"Johannes," declared Achteruit suddenly, "you are right. Such a thing in the paper would be bad for you even if Oakley did sign it. Our people would all see everywhere that the Predikant had been insulted in your house."

"I must go and talk with the Predikant . . . this public apology is all nonsense."

"Johannes, you are wasting your time—the Predikant's mind is made up. Oakley was even more impudent to him this morning than last night—I stood in the side-room and heard him. He called *Mijnheer* a 'bull' and 'cow' . . ."

"But, Willem, how can a man be a 'bull' and a 'cow' at the same time?"

"Nay, I don't know," said Achteruit, whose English was so shaky that he had thus translated "bully" and "cowardly." "I suppose that was why the Predikant was so cross. But, Johannes, if I was you I would stop all the trouble and sack Oakley at once. Gerard can come to work for you, as soon as he's had his dinner. Besides, it's a half-holiday." Then he added, "Oakley's contract is up to-day."

"How do you know that?" Van Ryn had not lost sight of the fact.

"*Somaar*" (just so).

Van Ryn was greatly troubled by the latest aspect

of things; and had it not been the day of Huysmans' meeting and the eve of the Elections he would have been able to think of nothing else. As it was, he walked away pondering deeply and earnestly. . . .

* * * * *

When the store closed at one o'clock that Wednesday, Ned Oakley lunched on "Prince of Wales" biscuits and cheese. As he munched, he found himself laughing bitterly at the adoration of the Boers for these sweet things despite the royal name which had been given to them long ago.

And this splendid succulent cheese (as good as anything produced in the land of his parents or theirs), the Boers had learned to make through necessity, and the Duke of Westminster! It had taken an English peer to show the descendants of the greatest dairy-farmers in the world how to make cheese! And still there were racialists willing to put a Mauser bullet into the dairying duke if only the word were given to "go." Did not a Boer in the Ficksburg district, when excuses and explanations were being made on all sides for the Rebellion, frankly say, "I rebelled because I wanted to shoot Englishmen!"

As he lunched, Ned tidied the store and then brought the books up to date. He wrote down everything necessary, on a concise balance sheet, which he left in an envelope addressed to Mr. Van Ryn, and told him which goods were running out of stock and ought to be replenished. Then he cast a final glance round the place, locked the back door and went to the stables. Here the shop-boy was seated beside a little fire, warming a tin of sardines for his lunch.

"Stoffel," asked Ned in the Taal, "where did you get those sardines?"

"No, *baas*, I bought it by the Indian."

"You get your living from Mr. Van Ryn and you buy your goods from the Indian? Are you sure that those are not our sardines?"

"No, look, *baas*. The tins here is different—I'm not er t'ief, *baas* . . . the Indian sells much cheaper than Mr. Van Ryn."

Ned saw that the boy spoke the truth, and he realized that it was only his own affair with the Predikant over again, in another form. If he had the right to vote for whom he pleased, surely this *skepsel* had the same liberty in regard to spending his own wages?

"All right, Stoffel," he said, "but *pas op*, work well and stay with Mr. Van Ryn because he is a good *baas*."

Stoffel had been with Mr. Oakley before the business changed hands, and he seemed to discern something behind the advice. "Is *klein baas* going away?" he asked, once again calling Ned "little master" as in the old days when Thomas Oakley was the "big *baas*."

Ned nodded "Yes."

"Where goes *klein baas* now . . . to the war again?"

"Yes, Stoffel . . . to South West Africa."

"*Klein baas* is going to fight Duitsers, *neh*? *Baas*, kill one for me too, hey! They kicked a nephew of me to pieces there when he worked with the Cape boys before the War. Bad people the Duitsers, *baas*!"

Ned gave this old fellow a pipe, a red handkerchief and half a crown, amid great and joyful demonstrations. Then he went to the stable-boy, another faithful servant of his father's, told him too that he must stay with

Mr. Van Ryn, gave him a little present, and walked off across the veld, home.

* * * * *

Van Ryn and his fellow committee-men spent a busy afternoon in preparation for Huysmans' meeting that night. A rumour was in circulation that the "Sappers" intended to upset the speech by interruptions, questions, and possibly violence. "Let them try it on, the *smeerlaps!*" cried Oosthuisen. He at once hurried about the dorp, stopping every now and then to discuss the prospect of a row "if the Khakis try their Jingo tricks on." As he and Willem Achteruit stood near the Bioscope talking, Ferreira and Du Plessis passed. When they neared the Nationalists the two stalwarts, by tacit consent, ceased talking. So did Oosthuisen and Achteruit. A chilly "*dag*" was barely exchanged. Half a minute later Ferreira remarked, "Did you notice how those two r-rebels kept quiet when we came past? I bet they're up to some *vernuikerij*" (mischief).

Oosthuisen meanwhile was saying, "Willem, you can bet those two Jingoes are planning to insult our people to-night."

"Yes," replied Achteruit. "I heard them saying nothing when they came past us. A Jingo's a *schelm*, Barend."

"You know," continued Oosthuisen sombrely, "if Koos goes on with his khaki politics, my sister will one of these days leave him and come stay with us."

"Barend," exclaimed Willem piously, "marriage is a sacred thing, and to mix myself up in other people's domestic affairs, I refuse! But if your sister left your brother-in-law, I feel certain the Predikant would give

her right, because a husband cannot go against his own wife's people and politics."

All over Unionstad little groups that afternoon orally anticipated the night. There was a particularly large number of farmers in town. These sorted themselves out according to their political convictions, which were perfectly well known to everybody, although sometimes a Ja-broer (" yes-brother ") would pretend to agree with the opposite point of view, for peace sake or business. A number of particularly strong and daring young fellows were selected by the Committee to spread themselves over the hall, in defined places. At the least interruption they would seize their man and put him out of the building; if he struggled, so much the worse for him.

These special guards now pulled each other about and wrestled clandestinely in corners, practising for the night. One of them knew several catch-as-catch-can holds which he had picked up from a British Tommy while a prisoner-of-war in Ceylon. When he showed his friends the " hammer-lock " they laughed and shouted " *donder !* " (thunder).

A big *bywoner* had a *knob-kierie*, which he declared he would use if any one worried him. After this exercise and horse-play, these young *kerels* went to the Masonic Hotel for a drink, and there got into an argument with O'Flinnigan's friend, the barman, who needless to say was not an Irishman. This fellow was an Afrikander named Jack De Kock. He had joined a circus some years before the war, knocked about the country in company with various Uitlanders, from whom he acquired a semi-American accent, baggy trousers, plastered and parted hair, and unquenchable faith in

"Kid McCoy." Then he got to England somehow, and being possessed of a magnificent torso and long legs enlisted in a regiment of Life Guards. His first day on duty in Whitehall was not a success, and Private De Kock was severely reprimanded for having moved his head seventeen times while on sentry-go. He persevered, however, and when the war broke out already spoke English with a Scotch accent, believed firmly in Home Rule for Ireland, and was incidentally a fine soldier. He went to France with the first 100,000, and there received a wound in the leg which quickly ended his career in the Army. Then he returned to his native land, and after being mildly lionized at Cape Town by a few people who believed him, went inland, and was now settled in Unionstad as barman and "runner" for the Masonic Hotel.

Of course the news quickly spread that De Kock had been in the Retreat from Mons, and he was consequently treated to many a drink that he did not want by the loyalists. But another side of Unionstad deplored the fact that a Boer had fought in the British Army, while the "Jongs" frankly threw doubt on the whole story. The unfortunate De Kock, who wanted nothing better than to forget the miseries of 1914 and his limp leg, was forced to talk all day long about the war.

"Hey, jong," now said the catch-as-catch-can wrestler, "were you really in the fighting line?"

Another tall fellow looked critically into a *tot* of Dop brandy, and asked: "Did you truly see Germans . . . real ones, hey?"

Then they tried to bowl De Kock out by questioning him as follows:

"How big were the Germans?—Did you see the

Crown Prince ?—Why not, if you were really there ? —How did you get your wound ?—But how could a piece of shell hit you if you say you were actually mixed up with the *Duitsters* ? "

" If they shot at you they would have hit their own men," interjected another young Boer, and the concluding remark made by the Jongs as they left the bar was : " *Nie kerel jij lieg, jij het van 'n wa' afgefal* " (" No, my boy, you're a liar—you fell off a wagon ").

Which was firmly believed by the anti-" Sappers," so that the unhappy De Kock when tortured by these jeers, his painful leg, and an inadequate pension, often wished that the Boers were right, and that he had in reality only fallen off a wagon.

* * * * *

While Unionstad prepared thus for the great event at night, Huysmans was making notes for his speech, and Ned Oakley packed up what he needed to take with him to Cape Town. He briefly told his father what had occurred, and induced him to refrain from going to the Predikant and " raising Cain." The elder Oakley approved heartily of Ned's decision to leave Van Ryn's employ forthwith and enlist for the German West campaign ; while Mrs. Oakley, after shedding a few natural tears, made no objections either. " It's your duty, my boy," she said. " You must fight for England."

" No," answered Ned, " I was born here, and I'm fighting for South Africa."

" Well, what's the difference, Ned ? " asked his father. " It's one and the same thing to-day."

"Only because this time England happens to be in the right, Dad."

"Now don't you two start arguing over politics," interrupted Mrs. Oakley. "There seems to be a germ about this country which makes every one squabble. Perhaps the dry air is good for it."

"Well, I don't know," said Ned. "Ireland's not a dry country, and they've got the germ too."

"Ireland," shouted his father excitedly, "don't talk to me about Ireland. I can't understand it at all. Look at that 'twicer,' O'Flinnigan! He wants Home Rule one week and Foot Rule the next. Here he is bawling at people like you to go to the Front, and his people won't do a damn thing for the Army in Ireland."

"O'Flinnigan doesn't represent Irish opinion, Dad."

"Well, what does he represent?"

"Himself."

"Well," cried the father angrily, "who *does* represent Irish opinion?"

"Nobody. An Irishman never represents anything but a negative to somebody else's positive. O'Flinnigan agrees with nobody but himself, and disagrees the moment you take his side."

"Anyhow, they're both disloyal enemies of the Empire," growled the old Englishman, "they and the Boers."

"They're nobody's enemies but their own," said Ned. "Loyalty to themselves comes before loyalty to the British Empire. . . ."

"What!"

"And they're more lacking in that than they are in loyalty to the Empire."

"Oh, do stop talking," said Ned's mother. "I've

heard nothing but politics ever since I landed in South Africa. Besides, it makes your father's head ache, Ned. He can't understand it at all."

Ned sat down and wrote to Van Ryn as follows :—

"DEAR MR. VAN RYN,—My contract expired to-day at closing time and I have decided not to renew it. I would have given you time to find a substitute before going, but something has happened to change my plans. You will find the cash locked up as usual, and a letter with it concerning the business. All the books have been brought up to date and are in order. I am enlisting for German West and do not expect to return to Unionstad.

"Yours sincerely,

'EDWARD OAKLEY.

"P.S.—Kindly send my last month's salary to my father."

He did not immediately send the letter, as he had no wish to enter into any discussion with Van Ryn as to why he was so suddenly leaving Unionstad.

The Cape Town train was due in at 9 p.m., the meeting at the Town Hall would then be at its height. Ned completed his packing, had a last romp with his two Pointer dogs and then ate his supper. During the meal Mrs. Oakley gave her son motherly advice to wear "wool always," an English custom of which Ned was contemptuous in that mild climate, though his father still suffered martyrdom from the heat of his underclothing on 350 out of 365 days in the year, and valiantly added to his discomfort by donning a bowler

hat, at which the people of Unionstad roared with laughter.

Mr. Oakley's advice to Ned was, "Wipe out as many of the German scum as you can, my boy, and don't forget your father's a West-country man."

The parting had all the unemotionalism of England about it. Ned utterly refused to let his parents accompany him to the station—the train might be late, he said, and they would be kept hanging about for hours. So his mother kissed him at the door, and Ned, who loved her dearly, never showed that he felt in the least bit moved. Oakley shook hands with his boy; the dogs barked, and then the Cape cart was off for the station.

As he passed Van Ryn's house Ned jumped down and slipped the farewell letter under the door of the office leading out upon the *stoep*. The house, as he expected, had the appearance of being deserted. Grietje, the kitchen-girl, was at the back talking to a Cape boy, while the housemaid had gone to the Bioscope. That is to say, she was outside its door, hoping—since all the white people were at the Town Hall for the other show—that coloured folk would be admitted to stand at the back of the gallery for sixpence each. In church the rule would never be broken, but the Bioscope proprietor was more plastic than the Predikant, especially when he had a poor house.

Half way to the station, Ned passed the Masonic Hotel 'bus, at the rear of which sat De Kock—a sad and solitary figure. Nobody was leaving by that train, nobody would arrive by it. This was written all over the ex-Guardsman's face. The morning 'bus had been crowded, but whoever heard of any one leaving Union-

stad in the course of a big political *indaba*, or of any one coming to it late for such an event?

A taste of war and travel had apparently destroyed De Kock's Afrikander appetite for politics. Besides, he had to go with "the blooming 'bus" whether any one arrived or not. "Is there a rottener job in the world than an hotel runner's?" he asked himself. "A chap feels such a fool when he meets a train, and runs up and down the platform shouting, 'Masonic Hotel, Masonic Hotel,' and the only passenger who gets off either goes to relations or the Commercial Hotel!"

And this poor lone Afrikander, what was he but an alien and an outsider to his race, forgotten by the War Office and the reporters who interviewed him after the Retreat from Mons? Now all he saw was trains leaving and arriving, people seen off and welcomed in . . . holidays, excitement and joy at the other end . . . for everybody but himself . . . he only carried the luggage and cried "Masonic Hotel." And the *Jongs* in the bar said, "You fell off a wagon!" Oh, it made him so damn sick and fed-up with everything! The only thing for a man to do in Unionstad was to go in for politics or booze.

At the station he met Ned, who told him that he was off to German West. For a moment poor crippled De Kock thought himself fit again, and wanted to leave on the same train. But in hurrying to cross the line he ricked his leg and realized that his war days were over.

The train came in. Ned shook hands with the station-master, who muttered something about "lucky man, tae get awa' from this dorp," and then, to a

mournful cheer from De Kock, the train pulled out.

As the lame "runner" predicted, there was nobody going back on the 'bus but himself. The Hottentot driver whipped up the horses, and these muscular animals trotted swiftly towards the stable. De Kock sat at the rear sadder than before. As they passed through the *spruit*, an oscillation of the vehicle nearly pitched him out. Luckily he hung on—had he fallen they would more than ever have jeered, "you fell off a wagon!"

Clinging on as the empty 'bus rattled along he thought to himself: "What is the good of booze to me?—I hate it. No, that is no game for a Boer."

Bitterly De Kock reflected that once he had been a great dancer, but now he could not even be that; and the *meisjes* steered clear of him, partly because he was a cripple and partly because he was "a khaki."

As they got near the Town Hall a great roar, and a clapping of hands, burst forth, followed by shrill, sustained whistling and cheers. "*Allemach*, that must be Huysmans going to speak."

A sudden and uncontrollable desire passed through the veins of the lonely Boer. He felt himself drawn towards the Town Hall like a cork to a whirlpool.

It was only a little past nine o'clock; the proprietor of the hotel was waiting patiently behind the deserted bar for the returning "runner." "If I don't turn up," said De Kock to himself, "it will probably mean the sack" (he had already stopped the 'bus and was irresolutely considering). Another storm of applause and whistling came from the hall, louder and more impressive at this short distance.

Like a reformed drunkard overpoweringly brought

into the presence of alcohol, the Afrikander ex-Guardsman suddenly felt himself irresistibly tempted, sucked into the whirling vortex of words and cheers, arguments and insults. Damn the Masonic! He was going to the Town Hall . . . was he not a man like any other?

And shouting, "Drive to the stables, boy," De Kock hobbled swiftly over the dusty, ill-kept road, and passed into the shadow of the Town Hall.

* * * * *

CHAPTER IX

A HINT FROM THE BLACK MAJORITY

THEY were returning home from the Town Hall, where Huysmans had had an hysterically successful meeting. Anita was very silent, because of her thoughts; so was Mrs. Viljoen. Van Ryn and Huysmans did the serious talking, and Maggie laughed every now and then as she thought of the way the "Jongs" had silenced a heckler. "Just fancy," she said—"they only shouted, 'You fell off a wagon,' and the big booby shut up at once."

Suddenly, during a lull in the conversation, Anita asked:

"Maggie, did you see Mr. Oakley there?"

"Which one, Ned, *hey*? . . . No . . . I wonder if he came?"

Anita said no more.

Then Van Ryn cried: "And what do you think of that *smeerlap*, O'Flinnigan . . . he came in late so that nobody could see him, and stood at the back near the door."

"I don't know why you get so angry about O'Flinnigan," remarked Huysmans. "I tell you, he's getting ready to say some very nice things about us. You'll see if he doesn't!"

"Do they call that honest?"

"Certainly not, but aren't there good and bad in every profession? As for O'Flinnigan, he's a renegade Irishman, and I mistrust that kind of man as much as a National Scout. And it seems to me he blackguards his own people and his own profession more than anything else. I picked up a back number of the *Unionstad News* in the house; in it there was an attack on the *Potfontein Post*, and this phrase occurred: "there are some writers in this country whose only claim to be called journalists is that they dirty clean paper for a living."

"*Allemach*," exclaimed Van Ryn. "Exactly what I think of O'Flinnigan."

"Of course . . . and that is why I can't understand your anger. The thing is humorous, that's all."

Thus walking home in the cool night air, they discussed the meeting, its various incidents, features and facets. Mrs. Viljoen timidly remarked to Anita that she thought Van Ryn had been splendid as chairman, very masterly and dignified. Johannes overheard the compliment, and it pleased him greatly. Almost unconsciously he took Anita's place next to the widow, so that Huysmans and his daughter were left beside each other. For a while nobody spoke. As they neared the house Huysmans said: "Well, I hope your expectations were realized, Anita?"

She seemed hardly to notice that he was calling her "Anita" after less than a week of friendship; but Van Ryn noticed it, and half nudged Mrs. Viljoen, who walked with him quicker, leaving Huysmans and Anita behind.

"Did I go far enough for you to-night?" continued Huysmans. "Did I say as much as you hoped on

the question of friendship between the two races of South Africa ? "

" Yes," she replied with something of vagueness. " You have been splendid . . . I hope it does not get you into trouble with our people."

" I hope not," he said. " But I meant every word . . . you are teaching me to believe in it—to-day I am beginning to feel that without English as well as Dutch there can be no future for our country. The black races will overwhelm us."

" Yes," she answered absently.

Maggie now ran ahead into the garden and up the steps to unlock the door. Huysmans, as he continued to speak, leant towards Anita, and his voice became almost tender. As they passed through the gate, behind Mrs. Viljoen and Van Ryn, Anita's hand brushed against his and the innocent contact just then strangely thrilled him. But Anita seemed oblivious of the incident and followed her father to the *stoep*.

At that moment, Maggie, who had entered the house, rushed screaming towards them.

" What is it ? What's the matter, Maggie ? "

" A Kafir," she cried. " He ran out at the back."

Instantly Huysmans darted towards the side of the house, and then down the garden, while Van Ryn plunged indoors and searched the rooms. Mrs. Viljoen seized Maggie, who was quivering violently, and at the same time screamed, " Come back, Anita." But the elder girl ran into the passage, passed Van Ryn and went to the kitchen. " Come here, father," she called out.

Van Ryn found her kneeling beside the cook, a Cape coloured woman, named Grietje. Meanwhile, Huys-

mans could be heard beating the garden; and feet came pounding past in the street, as people heard the alarm and ran to help.

Grietje lay unconscious upon the floor. A lump showed that she had been struck by some heavy blunt weapon like a knob-kerrie, on the side of the face. Anita fetched water and bathed the unfortunate woman, then she told Maggie to get brandy, and Mrs. Viljoen asked young Achteruit in the street to go for a doctor.

"Which doctor?" replied the "Jong." "Dr. Roose or Dr. Van Kyle?"

Huysmans, who had now returned to the front, shouted, "What does it matter which one, fetch the nearest!"

"He doesn't seem to know that Roose's a 'Sapper,'" grumbled Gerard as he hurried off.

While the women attended to the unconscious cook, Van Ryn went to the front of the house, where he learned that the Kafir had got clean away.

"Not much chance of finding him," said Huysmans. "There must be hundreds of niggers in the location."

"Hundreds?" exclaimed Van Ryn, "over a thousand."

He went to his office, tried the door and found it open. And inside what a scene of disorder! His papers had been flung about, as though by some maddened ape; the desk was smashed; on the floor lay a broken cash-box, empty. It had contained £9 in gold and some bank-notes, all of which was vanished. Van Ryn began to gather up bonds, bills and other securities; gradually he restored the place to order, and at last, after picking up every paper, he found the

letter addressed to him by Ned. He opened it and read. Coming on the top of this spoliation of his home, it had upon him the effect of cruel and callous desertion. He did not analyse Ned's reasons for going; and the motive behind it all, the motive which shaped reasons into action, he could not have understood had he known it. All he knew was that his house had been broken into and rifled by "some *bandiet*" of a Kafir, that his cook had been felled by a *knob-kierie*, and that Oakley had taken this occasion to leave him.

"*Verdomde Engelsman,*" he muttered; and these two words expressed the whole of his feelings. The violent burglary of his home, snugly situated in the heart of Unionstad, no longer seemed the terrible event of a few minutes ago. The significance of this descent on the dorp's chief citizen by one of the ever-increasing blacks from the location, went unnoticed. "*Verdomde Engelsman,*" he repeated.

Dr. Roose now arrived and was shown into the kitchen. He applied restoratives which at first had no effect. "Do you think she's dead?" asked Mrs. Viljoen, with a subconscious sense of the importance that this would cast upon them all.

"Lucky she's a nigger," remarked the doctor. "It takes a lot to kill them"; and presently, as if to honour the prophet, Grietje groaned and began to show other signs of life.

"Go and tell father, Grietje's all right."

Maggie went to the front of the house and in the *voorkamer* found several neighbours, including Klaas Kachelhopper. On the *stoep* all the Achteruits crowded. "Isn't it awful, *hey?*" cried Mrs. Achteruit, very pleased to be there, and quite thrilled by the excitement.

"Just fancy, *hey* . . . it was only last night we were here."

"Have you seen pa?" asked Maggie.

"He is there in the office."

"You know Gert went to bring the doctor, Maggie," said his mother proudly.

"Ach ma, can't ma call me Gerard?"

Maggie went to her father and said, "It's all right, *pa*, Grietje is not dead."

"All right!" he shouted. "All right! Oakley sneaked off to the front while we were at the meeting . . . Here, look at his letter . . . show it to Anita . . . *vervloekte Rooinek* . . . that's the sort of people Louis Botha wants us to make friends with!"

"What's that?" whispered Achteruit to his wife. "Oakley, the *Engelsman*, has trekked to the war . . . Come here, Gerard . . . come with me."

They went to the door and Achteruit entered.

"What's the matter, old friend?"

"Willem," shouted Van Ryn, "you were right . . . I should have sacked Oakley long ago. Here he's cleared off and left me to look after the store alone and to-morrow is Election Day."

"*Ach mij Heere*," cried Achteruit, with pain and surprise. "How could a man be such a coward? Never mind, Johannes . . . listen to me, and you'll yet be glad the *Engelsman's* gone. Are you *quite sure* you didn't give him the sack?"

"Of course I didn't. . . . What do you mean, Willem?"

"Johannes, Oakley has gone away without signing that apology for the Predikant." Van Ryn groaned.

"Now the Predikant said if Oakley didn't apologize

you must sack him and take in his place an *oprecht* young Afrikander. Johannes, you *did* sack Oakley . . . that's why he cleared off . . . you sacked him to give the place to my son Gerard, who is outside now and can start working for you in the morning as soon as he's had his breakfast. Besides, you needn't open the store to-morrow, Johannes . . . it's Election Day. . . . Come in, Gerard . . . call your ma also."

And when the witnesses were assembled, Achteruit spoke: "Mr. Van Ryn sacked Oakley, the *Engelsman*, sacked him like an *oprecht* Afrikander, to give his job to Gerard at £16 a month and 5 per cent. of the profits."

"Nay, nay, Willem, I never said anything about £16 a month and 5 per cent. of the profits!"

"Would you give one of your own people less than an *Engelsman*, Johannes?"

"Ach . . . well, then, I'll give him £10 a month and 10 per cent. of the profits." He feared that soon there would be no profits.

"All right, Johannes," was the magnanimous reply. "I accept . . . we Afrikanders must help one another."

* * * * *

Anita put Grietje to bed as soon as the doctor had gone, and for a while sat before the freshness of the garden, thinking. Van Ryn was in such a state at Ned's departure that neither of his daughters cared to discuss with him either the robbery or the change at the store. Maggie showed Anita the letter which Ned had placed under the door; and, while her sister pondered over its contents, went to the pantry to cut herself some bread and butter. All this excitement had unstrung the stout girl's nerves—she declared that

her stomach was faint and that she needed something to " keep herself up." A large *kommetje* full of buttermilk and a bunch of grapes contributed towards this.

Anita was considering the phrase, " Something has happened to change my plans," the crux of Ned's letter, and the clue to his sudden departure. She was further puzzled by a message which Maggie brought warning her to say nothing of Oakley's having left. " Pa says you mustn't even discuss the matter. . . . The letter he showed you was private."

" Did he say nothing more, Maggie ? "

" No, Anita, he seemed very much upset and has gone to bed."

The bruised kitchen-girl lay propped up on a stretcher with a bandage over her face. She was quite conscious, but in reply to questions asked by Constable Smit said : " No, I don't know who hit me."

" Was it a Kafir ? " suggested the constable.

" No, I can't be certain."

" Leave her, please," said Anita. " I will ask her later on, when she is able to think better."

Sara, the housemaid, came in soon after the constable had left. She entered stealthily by the back door, as Anita still sat thinking over the letter.

From the stretcher Grietje glared balefully at the newcomer. Her eyes, glistening and tense, followed the movements of this girl, who merely stared back without a movement or a word.

Anita suddenly looked up. " Sara . . . where have you been ? Why do you come home so late ? "

" Meesees, I yis been by rer Bioscope."

" But the Bioscope's been out over an hour now.

Didn't you hear that a Kafir had broken in here and nearly killed Grietje ? "

"*Ja*, Meesees . . . they yis now tell me."

"You had no business to be out ; it is very much your fault. The Kafir would not have done this if the two of you had been about the house."

"How does Meeses know it was a Kafir, Meeses ? "

"Miss Maggie saw him run out."

"Oh . . . Meeses, if I was here perhaps he would hit me too, and then I will be dead."

Grietje sat up and it seemed that she wanted to say something, but as Anita glanced towards her and listened, the bandaged woman lay back and remained silent. All the time Sara looked at her with that steady stare by which the Bantu races conceal their thoughts from any but themselves.

"Sara," said Anita as she got up, "I am tired and I'm going to bed. You must look after Grietje, and if she wants anything you will find it here. If she gets bad, call me at once. Do you hear ? "

"*Ja*, Meesees."

Anita went to the *voorkamer*, where the others were awaiting her. Maggie sat munching sweets.

"It has been a poor finish to the evening," remarked Anita, for the want of something vital to say. She felt lonely and dispirited.

"I feel *toch* so sorry for your father ! " And Mrs. Viljoen really looked it. "Especially as the Election is to-morrow. Luckily he has found a young man to take Mr. Oakley's place. . . ."

Anita interrupted : "A young man . . . who ? "

"Gerard Achteruit," cried Maggie, her sides shaking

with laughter, at the humour which she inevitably found in every situation.

"Why do you laugh so at the idea of this young Afrikander, Maggie?" asked Huysmans. "Is it not time that our people grew used to depending upon themselves in business as well as in politics?"

"Oh, I suppose so, Mr. Huysmans . . . but you don't know Gert perhaps, *hey*? He is one of Anita's admirers."

Anita annihilated Maggie with a look and Huysmans took the opportunity to make peace and pay a discreet compliment. "If that is the young man's worst fault . . ." he said, with obvious meaning.

Mrs. Viljoen blushed and looked demurely down at this proximity to a perfectly proper passion; Anita forced a laugh and a conventional: "Thank you, Mr. Huysmans."

He saw, however, that she was displeased, and he added: "One should never laugh at even the most insignificant admirer—that is a political maxim of the greatest importance."

A moment later Anita excused herself; and breaking off the conversation went to bed. The others at once followed, and soon the house was wrapped in darkness and silence.

* * * * *

When all the white people had retired, Sara crawled into a heap of sacks on the floor, where she lay for some time without uttering a sound. Grietje moaned and put her elbow over her eyes, at which Sara leant forward and blew out the candle. A few minutes later Grietje rolled across and hissed in very low Dutch: "Did he get away?"

"*Ja*," muttered Sara.

"Nobody saw him?"

"Nobody."

"But the *jong meeses* (Maggie) says she did."

"She lies . . . she only saw his shadow."

Grietje answered: "How then did she know it was a black man?"

"I don't know . . . perhaps she smelt him."

There was another lull . . . they heard regular rhythmic steps in the street come closer, then . . . go farther away.

"You hear the policeman," said Grietje, "I should tell him about your man."

"Sheeh . . . *tula* (Silence) . . . if you speak I will choke you dead!" She used the Kafir word, "kweleza."

"*Pas op*," growled the wounded woman. "I have a knife . . . if you come here I will kill you."

"Then don't talk of telling the policeman about my man. He is black the same as we are."

"That is why I said I did not know him. . . . But he need not have hit me like this." She felt her wound and moaned: "That is not a proper stick to beat a woman with."

Sara answered softly: "Why then did you try to stop him from going into the house? You should not have done that. . . ."

Out in the street, thoroughly on the alert now that it was too late, Constable Smit slowly walked up and down, and then stood silent in the shadow of the wall. A Kafir song, accompanied by steady beating on a zinc drum stolen from the railways, came savagely over from the location. "Doom, ticka doomty, doom,

ticka doomty." It sounded like a challenge to the sleeping whites. Constable Smit stood erect and shook his fist defiantly towards the black majority that was so only in numbers. . . . "To-morrow is Election Day, and, thank God, you can't go and vote!" he cried. "Come on, you black *schelms* . . . come on—this time I'll catch you!"

"Doom, ticka doomty . . . doom, ticka doomty . . ."

CHAPTER X

ELECTION DAY

WHILE the police were next day vainly ransacking the location for a clue, Nationalists and "Sappers" microscopically searched the Voter's Roll to discover which electors could be vehicled to the polling booths. There was no touting. No "Nat" wasted breath bawling "*Stem* for Van Ryn, the true Afrikander candidate," and no "Sapper" spent needless time trying to persuade anyone to "Plump for Du Plessis, the Loyal Afrikander."

Every elector's inmost feelings were known, and the rival Committees set to work stolidly, doggedly, relentlessly, carting or motoring their customers to the Town Hall. There was only one question asked: "Have you voted yet?"

The issue was clear-cut enough: "S.A. Party *versus* the Afrikander Ticket, "Sappers" against "Nats."

People like the Resident Magistrate and the Bank Manager took good care to keep well out of sight all day, so as not to be drawn into expressing any opinion. But the Predikant was seen about the dorp a great deal; frequently he asked voters in a guarded way, "Have you been to *stem*?" If not, he would, without either actually advising or exhorting, subtly suggest the proper thing to do.

This got to the ears of Ferreira at lunch time, through

his wife's boasting " we are certain to beat you ; even the Predikant is working for us." Like a wise, if not an *oprecht* Afrikander, Ferreira did not stay to argue with his wife ; but instead conveyed the information direct to his Committee. They were furious. " *Allemach*, did not the S.A. Party pay as much towards the upkeep of the *kerk*, and the Predikant's salary, as the ' Nats ' did ? What sort of a game was this ? What business had the Predikant to go and stick his long nose into politics ? Who gave him the right to work for the Nationalists, even if the English Minister was helping them, the ' Progressive Dutch Party ' ? They had not asked the English clergyman to work for them—he did it of his own accord—besides, the few votes he could influence hardly counted. But the Predikant was different. They would watch his actions very carefully, and if they found him up to any *vernuikerij*, then let him *pas op*. Predikants had been turned out of their places by the congregations before . . . "

On the Nationalist side, the Committee was being much worried by Broekstap, the *slim* Boer, who had avoided paying his debt of £100 until Van Ryn bought Oakley's store and put on the screw. Broekstap at eleven o'clock was still out on his farm, after assuring the Committee that he would be in town early to vote. Instead of coming, he now sent word that a Cape cart would have to go out to fetch him, as his own vehicle had a broken wheel. Broekstap owned an *erf* in the dorp, and he was such a shifty fellow that the Nationalist Committee feared he might be sent for by the " Sappers " and perhaps even be persuaded to vote for them, though the real dodge was to ride to the Town

Hall at the expense of the "Sappers" and then *stem* for the "Nats."

"But," said Van Ryn, arguing it out in the Committee room, "a Jingo's a *schelm* . . . and if we let them bring Broekstap in, he might sell his vote along the road."

The result was that the *slim* one came in (as well he knew he would!) at the expense of the candidates. Broekstap wanted badly to get down at the Masonic Hotel, which was the unofficial headquarters of the "Sappers," but the driver had strict injunctions to take him direct to the Town Hall, where he would be carefully looked after until inside the ballot-box. When Broekstap left the ballot-box he said: "I hope I marked the paper all right . . . but my head was a little bit upside down, and I'm not so sure. Perhaps they will let me *stem* again a little later, *hey*?"

Then he went to the Masonic Hotel and got into conversation with Oom Kaspar, a "Sapper" member of the Council whose stinginess was a public byword. Broekstap had no real longing for liquor, but his ruling passion was to get something for nothing, so he kept murmuring: "*Allemach*, I feel a little bit sick today. . . . I wish I could get some Buchu brandy."

Oom Kaspar replied: "*Ach kerel*, it is such a pity the bar is closed. You know on Election days there is no drink sold." He rejoiced in the fact, which was the reason that he now so recklessly strolled into the billiard-room, and up and down the *stoep*, looking for voters to support his side.

"But you know De Kock, the barman. Can't you get him to let you have some Buchu brandy . . . it's medicine, you know."

"De Kock is not there to-day. . . . He's one of our election agents. But, Broekstap," asked Oom Kaspar seriously, "did you *stem* already?"

"*Ja nie*, Oom Kaspar!" He made use of this delicious Boer idiom, which, literally translated, is "yes, no," but which is used in such a way that it seems to express either the affirmative or negative.

"Broekstap," retorted Oom Kaspar sternly, "do you mean 'yes no,' or 'no yes'? Did you vote already or not?"

"*Ja nie*, Oom Kaspar, they wanted me to, but I didn't."

"Did you go in the box alone?"

"Yes, but there stood Paul Anderson, the Town Clerk."

"Well, Broekstap, what did you make?"

"I made nothing, Oom Kaspar. . . . The Town Clerk gave me no money at all."

"I don't mean that," said the "Sapper" agent. "What did you make on the paper?"

"I made a cross, Oom."

"Against whose name?"

"*Ach wacht 'n bietje*, Oom Kaspar . . . look for yourself." And he hauled from his pocket the voting card.

"*Allemach kerel*, why did you bring that card away?"

"No Oom, I didn't understand it, and I didn't trust the Town Clerk—he's a Nationalist, I believe—so when he turned his head round, I stuck this card in my tobacco-bag, and put some tobacco in the ballot-box."

"But what good is it now?"

"Ach, Oom Kaspar, can't I go back to look for my pipe and put it *somaar* in the box?"

"Nay, *kerel*, they won't let you go again inside the ballot-box. Your name is crossed off the list outside."

This rather upset Broekstap's equilibrium, and for a few moments he was silent. Then he murmured: "Couldn't somebody else, who hasn't yet been in to vote, drop it in the box when he goes in?"

Oom Kaspar was slow of comprehension as a rule, but now he looked at Broekstap with mingled amazement and admiration. "*Allemach kerel*, you're *slim* enough to sit in the Provincial Council."

Broekstap modestly blinked. "Oom, how much do you think that card is worth?"

"Broekstap," replied Oom Kaspar, "don't talk like that to me. . . . If you tell anyone I even saw this card I'll say you're a liar."

"Oom Kaspar," was the submissive answer, "you are right to be careful, but you can trust me. . . . If you were to tell anyone I had even shown you such a card, I would swear in the Court that you were a bigger liar."

But Oom Kaspar was greatly troubled, and warning Broekstap that on no account was he to show that card to anyone, hurried away, promising to speak about the matter later on.

About every half-hour the rival committees counted the votes, or rather the people whom they had brought in to poll, which was much the same thing, voters in Unionstad being so carefully trained and rehearsed that when they entered the ballot-box there was no danger of "spoiled papers," except from political perverts

sulking against their own party. There were several registered voters who, like Broekstap, caused their sponsors anxiety, but none inspired the mental anguish that Broekstap did. "That *smeerlap* will *vernuik* us yet," declared Van Ryn.

And sure enough about four o'clock in the afternoon the rumour circulated that "Broekstap is voting for the 'Sappers.'" Nobody knew quite how, but there it was. "We couldn't watch him inside the box. How does anybody know what he did there?"

"But I hear he hasn't voted at all; they say he kept his ticket." And the agent who brought in the story stood watching the effect of this revelation.

"Faanie," cried Van Ryn, "don't you go near Broekstap; I will send somebody to see him." Van Ryn was not going to put his own "head in the trap," he said. . . . If that rascal got an opportunity to perform legal blackmail, he would never pay another penny for his groceries. Now, how could they find out what he was up to? Van Ryn walked pensively down the street; suddenly the Predikant loomed up before him. Ah! . . .

"Mijnheer," he said, "that good-for-nothing Broekstap, I hear, is voting 'Sapper'!"

"What!" exclaimed the Predikant. "Has he dared . . .?"

"We are not absolutely certain, Mijnheer, for which reason it would be well if you could warn him of the consequences."

"Nay, nay, Johannes, don't ask me to mix myself up in such things—you know I refuse to take any part in politics. But tell Broekstap that I am very angry and that he shall be *strafed* accordingly."

"Thank you, Mijnheer—I will send Willem Achteruit to see the *schelm.*"

"Be careful how you use my name, Johannes. . . . Oh . . . how are things going at the Town Hall?"

"We are three votes ahead on our third candidate—Oothuisen and I are certain to be elected . . . unless they resurrect dead voters who fell in the Rebellion."

"Johannes, speak not lightly of sacred things."

Van Ryn found Achteruit listening to Schlimowitz in a lane beside the Town Hall.

"Don't forget now," murmured the Jew solemnly, "I'll give you my vote only on condition that you vote against coolie stores. Such things ain't right, is it, Mr. Achteruit?"

The Nationalist declared himself to be of the same opinion, as indeed he was, even to the extent of banishing all Asiatics entirely from South Africa. When Van Ryn arrived Schlimowitz hurried away to see another candidate. Having carefully got himself registered as an elector by virtue of owning an *erf* he promised both sides his vote on condition that no matter what Indian application came up before the Council, it was to be refused.

"Don't forget, Mr. Du Plessis," he said, "I'm ah voter for you every time, but you must promise me no more coolie stores, hey? Bring up die matter before the Provincial Council, hey?"

It was an easy promise to obtain, since "Sappers" as well as "Nats" were conscientiously opposed to coolies trading, or even to their existing, in the country. Schlimowitz wanted to be on the right side, no matter who obtained the majority. So he rushed electrically

about the dorp all day, taking advantage of the democracy of the occasion to get acquainted with anybody who might be useful, either as a future customer or as an opponent of Mahomet's licence. He even persuaded two candidates to sign papers by which they agreed, if elected, to vote against coolie trading.

The Indian, meanwhile, was doing a large business not only with his ordinary location customers, but with Van Ryn's clients as well. Most of these wanted to buy goods while in town, besides hearing Huysmans speak and voting when registered, and they were annoyed to find the Algemeene Handelaar closed, so they went to the coolie.

Now, had such people tried to make a convenience of Van Ryn, he would have been cool, even disobliging. But Mahomet received these casual and contemptuous customers with even more cordiality than he usually dispensed; and they left him resolved to complain to Van Ryn of the high prices at his store. Damn it all, it wasn't good enough . . . the coolie charged thirty-three per cent. less!

Achteruit, after receiving his instructions from Van Ryn, ran into Broekstap in the yard of the Commercial Hotel, the unofficial headquarters of the Nationalists, where he had gone after his unsatisfactory interview with Oom Kaspar.

"Nephew," began Willem sternly in the vernacular, "why did you do it, *hey?*"

"Do what, Uncle?" replied Broekstap, who was in reality a fifth cousin by marriage.

"It was a wrong thing to do," proceeded Achteruit, "very wrong . . . our people will never forgive it, Broekstap, never."

"Forgive what, *Oom?*"

"*Kerel*, how could you betray your own folk so, why did you sell your vote to the 'Sappers'? The Predikant says he will give you a heavy *straf*, and put you out of the *kerk*. . . ."

"Did the Predikant really say that, *Oom?*"

"*Ja*, Broekstap. And when he sees your vote in the box . . ."

"But how can he see that, *Oom?*"

"Don't ask me, Nephew," replied Achteruit mysteriously. "But the eyes of the Lord's servant are sharp. If your X is marked for the Khaki Afrikanders, the Predikant will see it."

"But, Uncle, I didn't vote 'Sapper,'" said the now quaking Broekstap. "*Vrachter*, *Oom*, that's true, so help me God!"

When Achteruit heard the name of God thus used by Broekstap, his heart gave a bound. It was now highly possible that the fellow would really speak the truth; and if he held the cryptic card, produce it. It was for this that the *slim* father of Gerard had used all those fine phrases.

"You say you haven't voted 'Sapper,' and you use the name of the Dear Lord . . . but can you prove your words? Can you prove that after coming in by our Cape cart—which cost the committee 15*s*.—can you prove you didn't vote 'Sapper'?"

"Who can prove what I did in the ballot-box?" fenced Broekstap. "How can I prove it?"

"The Predikant can prove it, Broekstap. He will tell us, unless you prove that you did not vote 'Sapper.' Are you ready to prove it, Nephew?"

Broekstap raised his hand to his head in a reverent

attitude as though taking the oath, and for a moment seemed to contemplate some new posture for prayer. Then he removed his felt hat, fumbled behind a broad crêpe band, and slowly drew out the missing ticket. "*Oom*, I could not have voted 'Sapper' because I did not *stem* at all."

As Achteruit examined the pasteboard, the other proceeded: "I was confused in the box, and rather than make a mistake and vote 'Sapper,' I brought away the ticket."

"Broekstap," replied Achteruit, with the gravity demanded by the occasion, "it is well for you that you are able to produce this ticket. If you had *vernuiked* us you would have had a heavy *straf*, both from our Lord and from Van Ryn, who would call up the bond on your farm."

"Uncle," asked Broekstap, "shall I put the X on the ticket and carry it to the box?"

"Nay, nay, *kerel—you* must not take it to the box."

"But why, Uncle? Do not men ever vote twice?"

"It has been done, Nephew. I myself heard of cases, but it is not necessary for you to try . . . your cousin came in himself and has already voted."

"No, I did not mean that, *Oom*," stammered the beaten Broekstap,—"though I have been asked to do such things, I won't say by whom. Also to vote for another second cousin of mine who was shot in the Rebellion—serve him right, too, because he fought for the Khakis."

He lied fluently, out of the knowledge of a shady past, but he did so in vain. For Achteruit knew him, and

knew, too, that no decent political agent would take the chance of using such a notorious scamp to impersonate a dead or absent voter in a purely local election.

It was far too risky.

CHAPTER XI

NATIONALIST MAJORITY IN TOWN COUNCIL.
S.A.P. Defeated in Yesterday's Elections.
An Exciting Contest and Record Poll. . . .

THESE were O'Flinnigan's discreet headlines in the next day's paper. In his description of the scene at the Town Hall, he said that there was loud cheering when the Town Clerk read out the following list of successful candidates :—

Johannes Van Ryn (Nat.) . . .	318
Barend Oosthuisen (Nat.) . . .	315
Koenraad Du Plessis (S.A.P.) . .	309
Jacobus Ferreira (S.A.P.) . . .	306
Willem Achteruit (Nat.) . . .	283

There *was* loud cheering, it is true, but it was mixed with the hoots and groans of the opposite party. O'Flinnigan, however, passed over this. He made a cryptic reference to—

"Certain individuals who were unsportsmanlike enough to dissent from the verdict of the electors," and each side took this remark to apply to the booing and hissing by the others. O'Flinnigan made excellent

use of the Nationalists' victory to reingratiate himself with the Afrikanders. His headlines were correct, but they might also be regarded as exhibiting pleasure at the defeat of the "Sappers"; and in the body of the leading article the *Unionstad News* said:

"We hope and trust that the weapons of party politics will now be laid aside, and that the minority will accept defeat without bitterness, and assist the majority to conduct the municipal affairs of this rising town with dignity and good-will. This paper will endeavour by every means in its power to discourage any Sinn Fein tactics in the Council."

When O'Flinnigan saw in cold type that phrase "Sinn Fein tactics," his eyes moistened with pride, and he beamed benevolently and alcoholically upon his "comp." Anything to do with Sinn Fein he knew would go down well with his readers, who had not the faintest conception of what the words meant, nor did they know that O'Flinnigan's family in Ireland were as ardent in the cause of "we ourselves" as O'Flinnigan was himself, or for that matter, everybody else in Unionstad. All they knew on reading "Sinn Fein" was that these two words sounded murderous and secret, and that everybody who used "Sinn Fein tactics" must indeed be a bad lot. And the Nationalists who bought the paper read into Sinn Fein "Sapper rascality"; and the "Sappers" read into the words "Rebel disloyalty"; and the only person in the world who knew what they did mean was utterly insincere, writing purely with the object (as he had himself once described it) of "profitably dirtying clean paper."

Besides his article on the election, O'Flinnigan devoted great space to Jan Huysmans' meeting; and,

without saying a word to offend the "Sappers," contrived to leave the impression that the affair had been tremendously successful, and the speech a masterpiece of constructive oratory.

Indeed, he went so far in his efforts to whitewash Huysmans from the previous stains of his own ink, that he ended by damaging him with some of the more sombre and extreme members of the Nationalist Party in the district.

"What is he up to?" asked a Boer from Papplaats. "It looks to me as though he is a little *Engels gesind*" (English disposed).

"Why this talk about making friends with the English Afrikanders?"

"Huysmans spoke well, but he mustn't be so fond of holding out his hand to the Khaki brigade."

"*Ja nie*, I was a little disappointed; he should not," etc., etc.

Such comments were freely passed after the appearance of "the rag." Prior to this the friendly tone which Huysmans adopted had either not been understood, or it had been ascribed to *slimness*. "He just says that to *vernuik* the English," was how Oosthuisen defined it. But O'Flinnigan's discredited pen sowed the seed of dissatisfaction—strange effect of the printed word on certain minds. They knew who wrote the whole of the *Unionstad News;* they had a supreme contempt for O'Flinnigan, and if they met him in the bar of the Masonic, his words had no weight whatever, yet the moment he reproduced his opinions in print, these assumed a new and wonderful authority; with the power to please or displease in an extraordinary degree. The sanctity of cold type raised the dis-

honoured scribbler above his fellow-men. Discussing the matter with Van Ryn, Huysmans said :

" It is print, not the pen, which is mightier than the sword, for only after the words of the writer appear in type have they any force. Print to the writer is what the uniform is to the policeman, the wig to the judge, or the Crown to the King. It is the symbol of authority, and its power lies in its one-sided unanswerability, like the decrees of a judge. There is no arguing with the printed word, and that is the strange secret of its power when used by the most contemptible men against the mightiest."

Simply because the discredited O'Flinnigan now praised Huysmans, and said, " he surprised us by his moderation," the more bitter Boers began to entertain vague suspicions of their leader's honesty.

Huysmans, however, felt none of this. " Didn't I tell you ? " he cried, and Van Ryn was so elated with success at the poll that he laughed loudly too. Truly O'Flinnigan understood the psychology of " the first hours after publication " !

Despite his mercurial policy, too, he had a keen sense for continuity in facile malice, and once again a letter appeared drawing attention to " the scandalous congestion at the Goods Sheds," where, according to an anonymous correspondent who signed himself " *Skilpad* " (Tortoise), there were—

> " fully six bales of paper, three drums of sheep dip, four ploughs, many bags of fertilizer and other goods there lying in disorder, while the farmers cry out in vain and see their sheep dying of scab, etc., etc. . . ."

This letter served the double purpose of pleasing the Boers and damning the station-master.

After the result of the election had been announced there was loud talk of "a petition." Achteruit had only polled two votes more than Van Rooy, the "Sapper" candidate, and people now began to whisper things about that ticket of Broekstap. This was largely due to the cackling of the *slim* one, who boasted that he had been responsible for the victory. "You see," said he, in an effort to get the reward of virtue, "if I had not voted for Willem Achteruit he would have had only 282 votes; and if I had given my vote to Van Rooy he would also have had 282 votes."

"Yes, nephew, that is so," said Achteruit, "but if I had told the Town Clerk about that ticket, you would have had perhaps 282 days in gaol. It is as well for you that I tore it up."

And he walked off, leaving Broekstap to ponder over a difficult situation. In the end he decided that he had never seen such a ticket except in the ballot-box, which answer he gave when officially interrogated by the Town Clerk. And so the proposed petition against Achteruit's election fell to the ground, for the inevitable scrutiny revealed nothing but the apparently debated ticket lying snugly in its proper place among the others; though if it were Achteruit's, how it got there was a mystery.

But though evidence was lacking on which to base a petition, the "Sappers" were fully convinced that their Predikant had worked against them. They tried to persuade Broekstap that he could safely make an affidavit "for church purposes only"; as once in possession of this document the congregation could call

its minister to account, and by vote of a substantial majority even dismiss him from his post, though how this majority was going to be obtained nobody knew, in face of the poll.

But Ferreira was hopeful of some achievement; he said, "we will bring his conduct before the Church Council and get him shifted to a little dorp."

Ferreira looked upon Unionstad as quite an important town.

Broekstap, however, failed the "Sappers" now, just as he had done on Election Day. The fear of the Predikant was in his heart, deep and ineradicable; it was for this reason that he had piously erected that cheap tombstone to the memory of his late wife, before courting her sister. Oom Kaspar too was inclined to temporize. He had no wish to embark on a course of action that might lead to the Supreme Court . . . law was very expensive. He cited the case of the Bethel congregation at Vrededorp, Johannesburg, which in 1911 had brought a High Court action against Predikant Dempers to compel him to hand over the keys of the church and other property. The congregation had dismissed the minister, but he locked them out of their own *kerk*, and put policemen at the door to see that they stayed there.

"Our Predikant is likely to be just as *kwaai* (angrily combative) and the 'Nats' are sure to help him. No, no, let things stand as they are."

Besides being the stingiest man in Unionstad, Oom Kaspar was notorious for trimming his sails to any wind that blew; and now that the Nationalists possessed a majority in the Town Council, he had no desire to provoke them needlessly.

"Do not let us carry our party differences into the House of the Dear Lord," he said, very piously and prudently. "It is wrong in the eyes of Heaven . . . and it can cost a lot of money."

The Nationalists not only had a clear majority of one vote, but they were the healthier lot of councillors as well, and less likely to be kept away by illness on important occasions. And then, too, Thomas Oakley was being counted on definitely as a "Sapper," which he was not. For to this stiff-necked Englishman, the moderate Dutch were merely the lesser of two evils. Oakley knew that when he retired next year his seat would be filled by an Afrikander—of which party mattered little to him. He regarded it as certain that eventually the two contending Boer factions would coalesce; and instead of contemplating this in a South African spirit and seeing in it the salvation of the country, so far as the white races were concerned, his honest heart was filled with vague apprehensions of "disloyalty to the Flag" and "treachery to the King." He never stopped to reason deeply or philosophically, he was far too simple and honest for that. Nor could he even see the question with the broad view-point of the non-English looker-on, to whom the eventual disappearance of the white races into the black was as inevitable as the setting of the sun . . . unless the Dutch and the British welded themselves solidly together against the common and natural enemy. All Oakley saw in any *toenadering* (coming together) of the bickering factions, was a trick to deprive King George and his heirs of their legitimate ownership of the country discovered by Bartholomew Diaz and settled by Jan Van Riebeek.

Separated by 6,000 miles geographically, and by many years intellectually, from the vast democratic movements of Europe and America, Thomas Oakley, descendant of English farmers, was every bit as sturdily conservative as the Boers whose ideas repelled him so. And for this reason he unconsciously patronised the Progressive Dutch, flattering their very human vanity with compliments on "loyalty to the Flag." Oakley had all his country's affection for enemies converted into friends, or for foreigners of any kind who agreed with his national point of view. From such men he wanted nothing but their esteem and appreciation; a clever schemer could extract from him money or its equivalent, providing only that he possessed the flexibility of conscience or belief necessary to make his opinions square with those of this plain-dealing man.

Had he lived a few centuries earlier, Oakley would have been a religious zealot, persecuting the ancestors of these Boers, or being persecuted by them. But had he, as a Protestant, encountered a contrite Catholic, or, as a Catholic, come into contact with a penitent Protestant, he would have been merciful, in the extreme, and most probably charming. For the man's goodness of heart was as great as his inflexible loyalty to a new King and an old country.

These admirable qualities were now appealed to by the very person who had most contributed to his financial collapse, and a coloured man at that. Mahomet, the coolie, paid him a visit. The reason was simple; Abraham Schlimowitz had paid *him* a visit.

Directly the Election was over, this happened:

Schlimowitz hurried along to the Indian store,

which had been closed for some hours in accordance with law. When the Jew knocked at the back door, Mahomet put out an amiable head and asked: "Me get you what, sar?"

But the Jew wanted to make no after-hours purchase, and replied: "Mahomet . . . you heard I bought this *erf* from Attorney Aasvogel?"

"Yes, sar . . . I hear . . . me very glad you my landlord!" And he smiled another lie to accompany it.

"Vell," said Schlimowitz, "I'm sorry to disappoint you by breaking off der connection, but I've got to give you a month's notice to leave."

"Notice! . . . Oh, sar—Oh, sar, where I take my little children? . . . where I go? Oh, sar, I good tenant . . . I pay you mor-r money for ground. Come inside, sar, come and talk with me. Oh, sar, I pray you!"

And he fell upon his knees, flinging his arms round Schlimowitz's fat legs, and wailing so bitterly that his family came out in terror.

"Keep *sthum*—be quiet—don't make such a noise," said Schlimowitz. "I don't vant to be hard on you . . . only I vant my *erf*."

But no sooner had he said this than the coolie renewed his lamentations, and the sorrow infected his offspring, two of them weeping in co-operative harmony with their afflicted father. And from all around came that stifling odour of the Orient in Africa—a mixture of burning incense, goat's flesh, strange dishes, fruit and cheese for sale, oriental scents—in short, an overpowering and exotic stink to the nostrils of a Russian Jew with his simpler sense of the unclean.

Schlimowitz was not either a hard-hearted or a cruel man. He was true to type—utterly unlike the popular conception of a Hebrew Shylock. Centuries of race oppression had, of course, endowed him with ruthless cunning in commerce, which to him was life; but in the presence of a wailing and suppliant being like this, he felt his heart, as he expressed it, "turning into vatery milk."

"Send those kids away, Mahomet," he cried. When the brats had disappeared the Jew became very fierce and shouted, before his feelings could get the better of him: "If you howl again, I'll go straight away and send you notice through the lawyer." He could not risk the consequences of having his emotions so harrowed by this wretched fellow's tears.

"Listen to me," he said sharply. "It's no good veeping and vailing. I'm villing to buy you out. How much do you vant?"

"Oh, sar . . ." began Narasamy.

"Shut up, you schwein!" The coolie abruptly stopped.

"How much do you want for this tin housie and the stock?"

With the development of the war, goods had become increasingly difficult to buy, for which reason Schlimowitz wanted badly to do a deal.

"Me can't sell, sar . . . me got brudder in Bombay . . . . brudder in Transvaal . . ."

"You mean to say you can't liquidate without your brothers? Vy every day you sell stuff without them."

"Oh, sar, my brudders got plenty stock; he sell you mor-r."

"Vich of you is the boss?"

"We all alike, sar . . . one same as other."

An idea flashed through the Jew's quick brain. He would see—it might work!

"Mahomet," he said, "ven were you bankrupt last?"

"Long time ago, sar . . . many years."

"And your brothers vere preference creditors?"

"Oh, sar, how you know?"

"How do I know!" he winked prodigiously. "How do I know! Tell me, have you ever had a fire? Vat, never had a fire yet?" Then with a pretence of sudden stern anger he dropped his voice. "Are you the brother who went into the Transvaal after the Boer War on a 'crook' permit?"

"Sahib . . . Oh, sar . . ." and almost immediately the Indian recovering from his fright, recommenced to lie, fluently, artistically. But Schlimowitz had learned what he wanted to know; he had with his own eyes looked upon the link in Mahomet's armour. He knew that a large proportion of the Indians in the Transvaal had entered by fraud; impersonation, bribery, and forgery were the means principally used to circumvent the drastic laws of the white men against Asiatic immigration. Mahomet's likeness to his "brothers," incautiously spoken of in the excitement of that moment, had supplied Schlimowitz with food for thought; and now he held a lever by which, if the worst came about, he might expel the Indian from South Africa for a past offence.

"Now, come on," he said; "if your price is right, I'll take over die whole stock."

"Me can't sell, sar . . . me open nother store."

"Aha," thought Schlimowitz, "he doesn't talk about his brothers any more."

"Suppose I go see your brother in the Transvaal," he suggested.

"He not there now, sar . . . he gone to Cape Town for business."

"Yes . . . I thought he wouldn't be there," said the Jew. "So you'll open another store, hey . . . vere?"

"Here in Unionstad, sar. I hire *erf* again, sar; if you won't permit, then elsewhere I shall get a piece of land."

"Now, look here, you won't get an *erf* . . . do you know Mr. Van Ryn?"

"Yes, sar, bad man—not good for my people."

"All right. Vell, Mr. Van Ryn has got a mortgage on nearly all the vacant *erfs;* but suppose for argument ve say you do hire a piece of land, you can't build on it."

"Why not, sar?"

"Vy not! Because Mr. Van Ryn is Mayor and he's boss of the Town Council, and you'll never get your licence or your building plans passed."

"But me got building plans passed before . . . I will move her to nother *erf.* This house was passed by Almighty Council and Sanitary Inspectors."

"Yes, you fool, ven the 'Sappers' had the majority and ven Van Ryn hadn't a store. But now you'll never get leave to stick up this building anywhere else."

"My brudder . . . all Indian man, he fight Gerrman, sar . . . me British subject same like you, sar."

"Tank you," beamed Schlimowitz, "I got naturalized since der var, but they still call me a Peruvian, although I come from Russia. But tank you for der compliments."

"Is not a shame, sar, to treat British subject like dog, sar?"

"Don't argue like a fool," cried Schlimowitz. "In South Africa they say, 'if you vant a V.C. or a licence for vat you did in the War, go to England and get it!' They'll tell you to *voetsak* out of Unionstad, and if they find out anything serious about you, they'll deport you to India."

For a moment Mahomet trembled on the verge of tears; but he restrained his moisture and replied: "Me speak to Mr. Ghandi . . . she speak to Mrs. Besant . . . he speak to Viceroy . . . she speak to King George."

"Yes, and I'll talk to Oom Johannes and then vat a hope you've got! Now, come on, don't be a fool—how much for the stock?"

And these two astute traders harangued each other for an hour. Eventually Mahomet temporized, he promised to take stock and state a price for the business as it stood.

Schlimowitz then went away to his room in the Masonic Hotel, leaving the words to soak in. One thing distressed him greatly—he would have to find out in the morning whether or not the coolie's stock and premises were heavily insured against fire. The resourceful Oriental knew so much about storekeeping that he might decide on a fire as the golden bridge of escape from his dilemma. And Abraham wanted to buy that stock.

Next morning, Mahomet went to see Thomas Oakley. He was received with no particular gladness, the first words being: "Well, you damned monkey! Still living on the smell of an oil-rag?"

But Mahomet cringed and whined, and he waved the Union Jack as well, pointing out what victories his people were achieving, or would achieve, in the War. Then he explained the philosophy of Russian Judaism, as he understood it; and finally came to the subject of the Dutch—oh, the dreadful Dutch! They would refuse him—a British subject—permission to erect his magnificent tin store on another *erf* (if he hired one); they would prevent him from flying the Flag of the King over his building . . . they would kill him and starve his wife and children. . . . Yes, if the English gentleman would help him, he took an oath, a dozen oaths, to fly the Union Jack for ever and ever, Amen!

At length Oakley interrupted the flow, it had grown into a patriotic speech; and though unable to abstain from helping any one who attacked Germans and Nationalists, he utterly disbelieved in the sincerity of Mahomet. But the idea of a Union Jack floating eternally overhead in this Dutch dorp appealed to his most aggressively patriotic feelings; how the sight of the Old Flag would irritate the Oosthuisens and the Van Ryns! Yes, he would love that. "Mind you," he said, "if you get leave to transfer your premises and business to another stand, I'll keep you to your word about the flag."

"Oh, sar . . . I swear . . ."

"Never mind swearing, you come and sign a paper . . . I'm getting slim too in my old days, just like the

Chosen Races." Relieving his feelings in this way by jibes at the Jews and the Boers, Oakley grew peaceable, almost benevolent. He began to discuss the war, then he switched back to the Indian question.

"I don't see how the Town Council can refuse a licence for a store on another stand, but I believe we have the right to stipulate for a certain class of building."

"My store very fine, sar, they pass her before, with plans and pacifications . . . now they say . . ."

"Never mind what they say, remember this is a British colony. I'll support you in the Council on condition you fly that Union Jack."

Mahomet salaamed and went home feeling that at least he had one friend in this hostile camp; though, for the success of his plans, he wished that Oakley were the Jew and Schlimowitz the Englishman.

Meanwhile Van Ryn and Schlimowitz were fighting out another battle at the Algemeene store. They could not go away to Van Ryn's office, much as they wished to, for Gert Achteruit was proving a poor assistant, and Van Ryn now feared to leave the place for a moment, besides which Achteruit sen. was allowing himself unheard-of liberties with the dried fruit, tobacco, etc. Gert had, indeed, not been on duty in the store one hour before "pa" reached over the counter and "tasted" some burnt almonds from a bottle at the back. Van Ryn coming hurriedly out of the office witnessed the performance, and he wondered how far such a beginning would take his fellow councillor.

"Schlimowitz," said Van Ryn, "I suppose you know I am to be elected Mayor this afternoon?"

"Congratulations, Oom!"

"*Ja nie*, never mind the congratulations . . . what about my *erf?*"

"Your *erf*, Oom . . . what *erf* do you mean?"

"You know what I mean—the piece of ground where the coolie store stands on."

"Oh . . . *that* erf!" But he remained silent.

"I lent you the £500 to buy it with on condition you kicked the Indian off."

"Of course," agreed Schlimowitz. "I've already given him notice to go."

"Yes . . . and I hear you want to buy his business, you *schelm!*"

"Vell . . . I thought perhaps I could sell the stock . . . wholesale to you."

"Schlimowitz, I hear you are going to run that store yourself."

"Oom . . . Oom . . . whoever told you such ah teeng . . . who . . . ?"

"All right," interrupted Van Ryn. "You can easily prove if it's a lie by selling me the *erf* back."

"But you don't vant that *erf* really?"

"*Ja* . . . because then I will know you are telling me the truth. Schlimowitz, I will give you £100 profit on the *erf*."

"Vat," shouted the Jew, "only £100?"

"That is 20 per cent. profit for a month—240 per cent. profit per annum, and I lent you the money at 8 per cent.," replied Johannes.

"Oom," said Schlimowitz, "I'll think about it and let you know." He had no idea how he would extricate himself from this difficulty with Van Ryn, but he

felt certain that God would not desert His people in the hour of need, and that some brilliant thought would come to his aid before the necessity arose of speaking the plain, unblushing truth.

"Schlimowitz," warned Van Ryn, "if you try to humbug me, *pas op!*"

In reply the Jew prodded the Algemeene Handelaar jocularly in the waist. "*Moenie so praat nie Oom*—don't talk dat vay. You hurt my feelings!"

"No . . . I have had enough of that talk." Van Ryn was sombre. "Now I want to know what you are going to do before I go to the Town Council this afternoon."

"Suppose," said the Jew, pretending it was all fun, "suppose I told you I vas going to keep on the coolie's store, vat vould *you* do?"

"Oh, well . . . we'd see."

"You'd try to stop me, I suppose?"

"*Ja nie*, the Council has got the power to prevent transfer of licence, to stop coolie trading."

"Qvite right, qvite right. . . . But suppose I bought the coolie's stock and built for myself another store?"

"We might find something wrong with your plans and specifications, Schlimowitz."

"Oh, yoy, yoy, yoy," cried the Jew in distress, "would you do such ah teeng? Do you know I'm a naturalized British subject since the War? I'll go to the Government. . . ."

"*Ja*, and now you can go to the devil or to the other British subject's store! Clear out of here, you *schelm!*"

And he walked menacingly towards the Jew, who

backed out of the office and put the counter between himself and the angry Dutchman.

Without any fixed plan, Schlimowitz unconsciously acted on Van Ryn's advice, and a few minutes later he found himself in the coolie store. Mahomet received the Jew as though he were one of the kings of Israel come to life again; and Schlimowitz felt that he did not look the part at all. Flinging his legs over the chair which was obsequiously brought to him, the *smous* told his victim to go on serving the niggers and get rid of them. While Mahomet complied with the request, Schlimowitz observed and admired. Oy, yoy, yoy, how the coolie worked the scales! And suddenly an idea was born in the Jew's brain, the idea for which he had waited so long. Yes, the more he watched Mahomet weighing sugar, rice, coffee and flour, the more he believed in his idea.

When the rush of customers had been stayed by the coolie and his juvenile staff, Schlimowitz led the way inside. Here he had to listen to several more tempting offers for the land. Mahomet even expressed willingness to purchase it. Schlimowitz shook his head firmly, and replied: "Vat about the price for the stock and the building?"

And they went over all the old ground again until angrily the Jew shouted:

"You've got to sell because you can't get another licence."

"You not right, sar . . . me get permission from Municipality . . . Mr. Councillor Oakley promise me cer-rtain, sar."

"Mr. Oakley!" said Schlimowitz with the infinite scorn of a Jew who has not yet made his fortune for

a Christian who has already lost one. "Mr. Oakley! Vat can he do for you . . . an Englishman! . . . don't be silly!"

But the Indian stuck stubbornly to his belief, and declared the intention of hiring a plot of land in the location and transferring his business there. This was precisely what Schlimowitz now wished to prevent. He quickly realized that probably the Algemeene Handelaar would facilitate the coolie's move to the location, for if he did this the Indian would surrender the white trade of Unionstad completely. It would certainly be one way out of the difficulty, and half a loaf was better than no bread.

After a suitable time spent in wrangling, Schlimowitz said:

"Mahomet, don't vorry your head about the business . . . suppose ve go into partnership?"

By the dazed expression of his usually alert face it was obvious that the coolie did not comprehend.

"Vat I mean is this—you go on with this store—I let you use the *erf*—and ve share the profits."

"Oh, sar, you mean that?" And Mahomet almost wept with joy, until he heard the Jew proceeding.

"I'll give you a young friend of mine—my future wife's brudder—he'll help in the business and keep an eye on the niggers."

"No, sar, me all right . . . me got my brudder . . . cousin . . . two child; if your brudder came too, my family must starve, sar. . . ."

"Vy? I'm not going to charge my future wife's brudder's salary against der business . . . he'll take a share of my share of the profits."

"You no trust me, sar?" There was exquisite pain oozing from the Oriental's eyes as he spoke.

"If you say such a ting again, you'll hurt my feelings, *kerel*," replied the Jew.

Then he set out eloquently the many advantages of a partnership between his bare plot of land and Mahomet's store and stock and goodwill. Still the Indian was in no hurry to complete a deal on these terms, especially as the proposed Jewish deputy eliminated all hopes of an adjustment of profits in accordance with justice.

* * * * *

That afternoon the new Town Council assembled to elect committees and officers for the coming year, principally, of course, the Mayor.

Nationalists and S.A. Party separated themselves bodily as well as spiritually, just as they used to do in Van Ryn's store; Oakley sat at one end, preventing contact between the two factions; at the other extremity was the Town Clerk. By a side table O'Flinnigan sat with a note-book, waiting "for the fun to begin." Town Council reports were a feature of his paper—they were such safe stuff. The members blackguarded each other to their hearts' content—and O'Flinnigan just "displayed" the mutual abuse in accordance with his feelings at the moment of going to Press.

On this occasion the meeting was largely formal. Jacobus Ferreira, still being Mayor, presided at the opening, and made the usual valedictory speech in regard to the achievements of the past year. This occupied a long time in the telling, and could be sum-

marized by saying that the Council had apparently repaired two roads, bought one mule, and telegraphed its congratulations at least twelve times to Lord Buxton, General Kitchener, Mr. Asquith, Winston Churchill and Lloyd George for the victories of 1914–15.

After the recital of these deeds had been duly cheered from one side, amid derisive throat-clearing of the "Nats," the Council proceeded grimly to elect the new Mayor. Only two candidates were proposed, Ferreira by the S.A. Party, and Van Ryn by the Nationalists. And the result, freely prophesied and inevitable, quickly removed Ferreira from the Mayoral Chair and put Van Ryn in his place, amid the exultant cries of last year's minority. In a short vigorous speech, the new Mayor thanked his supporters, declared his intention of upholding the dignity of his office, and of excluding politics from the deliberations of the Council. This declaration was greeted with significant cheers from the Nationalists, who regarded it as a distinct slap at the Government. The minority, however, howled dissent, and the few ladies in the gallery became quite nervous, except Maggie Van Ryn, who laughed and cried "*Sis!*"

Ferreira, in accordance with precedent, became Deputy Mayor. Then committees were elected, the Nationalists relentlessly using their majority to dominate these, just as their opponents had done in the past year. Van Ryn took particular care that Achteruit and he were put on the General Purposes Committee, before whom would come all such questions as licences and the erection of buildings within the Municipality.

And thoroughly satisfied with his future prospects,

convinced that the majority of one vote in the Town Council was a panacea for all his troubles, Johannes Van Ryn saw the menace of Palestine and India receding; and completely forgot the Kafir raid on his home two nights before.

CHAPTER XII

THE LESSONS OF THE DORP

HUYSMANS, at Van Ryn's earnest request, had stayed over for the Election, although there was no need politically for him to do so. His party was urging a return to Cape Town; and now, having prolonged the visit as much as he possibly could, he was booked definitely to leave Unionstad that night.

In one way, Anita felt an impending sense of acute loss. She realized that Huysmans had become a great factor in her daily life; that his intellectual companionship was unlike any other which she could hope to find in Unionstad, and that when he left her she would suffer both spiritually and mentally. The past week had been so wonderful. Every day she had heard Huysmans talk—beautifully, hopefully, sometimes of the present, but nearly always of the future. His views were perhaps too idealistic for the Boers—they considered him a bit of a dreamer—but he was so sincere in his beliefs, and so convincing when he spoke because of that sincerity.

Huysmans, too, possessed another great quality, not often associated with politicians and public speakers—he was an inspiringly sympathetic listener. And much as he had impressed Anita by the breadth and liberality of his own views, he had been even more influenced by her simple ideals of "live and let live."

In that short, eventful week, Huysmans had learned to modify considerably his old views upon the relations of the two races. Like Anita, he felt to the full all the concentrated bitterness of this dorp life, with the outlook, always narrow by isolation, now further warped by hatred of Dutch for English, and of Dutch for Dutch.

How could the pettiness and futility of this internecine strife fail to brand with the mark of Cain all those who yielded to its corrupting, inverted influences ?

To find a solution was not easy. Huysmans admitted this to Anita, pointing out the parallel of Ireland, where the statesmen of England had vainly tried for years to solve a problem much like that of South Africa. " Our hope lies in our danger . . . Ireland has not a black population five times the strength of the white waiting to fall upon it. Our people will realize their danger one day . . . very suddenly, and draw together. Self-preservation is still the first law of Nature."

He promised to give all his spare time and thought to the subject ; he regarded it now as the most vital of all his country's problems.

And if his own powers of observation and deduction had enabled him to realize this, it was Anita who first directed his attention to them, and imperceptibly formed his opinions.

Why had she done this ? Was it because of her sincere desire for a union between Dutch and English, or because of her interest in Huysmans ? Or was it something else ?

Now that he was going back to Parliament at Cape Town, Anita asked herself these questions. For she felt, mingled with that regret which the loss of Huysmans' companionship entailed, a strange secret satis-

faction almost at his going. To a warm and grateful heart like hers, the realization of this apparent ingratitude came with a shock of pain. How could she feel so towards him? Not for a moment had Huysmans been gallant—his feelings towards her she read in his eyes and heard in the accents of his voice, particularly when he and she were alone together; but the obvious and odious gallantry that she so hated, was utterly foreign to his sensitive nature.

While her father was realizing the municipal side of his ambitions in the Town Hall that afternoon Anita sat beneath the vines, on the shady side of the *stoep*, probing into her feelings with what she thought was ruthless self-analysis. Huysmans, who had gone for a walk to the station, suddenly entered the gate. For a moment Anita felt a strong desire to run into the house and conceal herself from him. But the honest, virile face of the man, as he came towards her, sent a feeling of shame into her heart for the very thought; and resolutely she waited for his coming, determined to treat him honestly, as he deserved. An understanding of an intimate personal nature was, she felt, inevitable . . . and now she clearly realized why it was that she half wished him to go.

"I am glad I have found you alone, Anita," he said very gravely, and he sat down beside her. "I have been to arrange for my seat in the train to-night. I wish it were possible for me to stay longer in Unionstad, but it is not. I should have gone back two days ago."

Anita wanted to say, "I am glad you did not go," as she felt the occasion demanded; but the words in some way changed themselves to "We have been

very proud to have you for those two days longer."

Somehow it was not the answer that Huysmans expected, and for a few minutes he remained silent. Then he went on, very seriously, very earnestly: "I was hoping for something more than pride—that is only the official part of things, connected with the political side of my visit." Still she did not give the encouragement he looked for. "I was hoping, Anita, that you personally would be glad if I stayed."

"I am glad," she said sweetly but frankly. "I wanted to speak to you and tell you how much your companionship has meant to me; how greatly I have enjoyed our conversations, and how much I have learned that will help me to be of use to our people. To me this week will always be a memory I shall cherish . . . you know I feel very very proud of the confidences you have shared with me, and I hope when you go back to Parliament that you will not forget me . . . write sometimes and say what you are doing and thinking. I shall be so pleased and so proud to have your letters."

"Always pride in what I do," he said a little bitterly. "If only you knew, Anita, how tired I am of being treated like a prize scholar when the school breaks up for Christmas. Can't you see that I want something more than public speeches, hand-clapping, cheering, applause and votes of confidence? Oh, yes, like any other man I too long for a home, the sympathy and companionship of a sweet woman, and the music of children's voices."

He took her hand in his, and looked into her eyes with such tenderness that his request became clearer than if he had spoken it. And suddenly Anita felt her cheeks wet; tears were running softly down—

unconsciously, silently, she expressed thus all her inmost feelings of pity for this man, so lonely in the midst of his public triumphs. She suffered keenly in the knowledge that her feelings for him were not those he felt for her, though overwhelmed with a mingled flood of gratitude, pity and regret that was akin to love, but not love itself as Huysmans suffered it. Why was this? she asked herself. Could it be because he was so much older than she? No, it could not be that, she said, for suddenly the girl felt herself older than the man, and stronger than he was too. She longed to shield him in her arms and protect him from the harshness and loneliness of life; to shower upon him the sympathy of a mother for an unhappy child.

But to tell him that her feelings were those longings of woman for man, as his were the longings of man for woman, was impossible—because it was untrue.

Huysmans saw mirrored in Anita's eyes what was passing through her mind, and he said nothing. Of what use was it now to express formally and definitely in words the thing that during the past week had become his ambition?

"I am sorry I spoke as I did, Anita. . . . Perhaps if I had waited . . . ? There has as yet been no time for you to know me. . . ."

"Or for you to know me either, Jan," she gravely interrupted. And then, as he was protesting that he did not need to know her better, that he had never met any other woman who appealed to every side of his nature, she continued: "Perhaps we shall speak of this again . . . some day . . . when I am older."

"When I am older," reflected Huysmans sadly. "Already I am too old for her to love . . . and when

she is one year older I shall be at least five more."

Without a word he rose and walked out into the garden.

* * * * *

Van Ryn, after his election as Mayor, came home with Mrs. Viljoen. Maggie had gone to the solitary Unionstad "café" to have tea with Klaas Kachelhopper, who had saved up his shillings for the occasion and had been hanging outside the Town Hall for an hour to speak. The stout girl was feeling faint after the stuffy air inside, where she and Mrs. Viljoen had gone to witness the Mayoral Election. Away from Anita's critical eye, Maggie allowed Klaas to lure her to tea; and Mrs. Viljoen acquiesced with a coy look such as the principals in one love affair bestow upon their fellow practitioners. She had a feeling that Johannes was that afternoon going to ask her a certain question, and, as the Mayor stood twenty yards off thanking an admirer for his good wishes, she awaited him with tremulous confidence. The man speaking to Van Ryn was Achteruit, and his parting words were: "Now don't forget, Johannes"—then lowering his voice—"*Allemach* . . . she looks very fine to-day too . . . if my *vrouw* were dead. . . ."

"*Ach*, be quiet," laughed Van Ryn, but as he came towards the widow he was carefully scrutinizing her with an appraising and approving eye.

"Where is Maggie?"

"She has gone to have tea with Klaas Kachelhopper."

"*Machtig*—Maggie also?" Then he smiled and went on: "Soon both my daughters will be gone, Fredericka, and I shall be left alone. Like birds when

their feathers grow, the youngsters leave us for each other."

"*Ja*, Johannes, that is so."

"Fortunately my girls have given me little trouble since their mother died . . . now if they had been boys, perhaps . . ."

He was thinking of the pretty widow's "khaki son," but, in order not to hurt her feelings at a moment like this, he returned to the subject of his daughters. "Maggie, I suppose, will marry some *jong kerel* in Unionstad . . . perhaps even Klaas—but Anita, I am glad to say, will do well for herself."

Then after a pause he added, "Jan Huysmans is a fine man."

"*Ja*," agreed Mrs. Viljoen, "that is so."

"And now," said Johannes, as though Anita's wedding-bells were already ringing aloud, "what is to become of me? That is the thing. . . . How am I going to get along?"

Mrs. Viljoen made no reply. . . . How could she, as a modest woman, say anything at that moment?

Van Ryn glanced discreetly at her. They were passing the Kerk at the time—it was Friday evening, and already the organist was practising for Sunday. The peal of the pipes swelled to a loud crescendo, not a wedding march, but something equally sweet and Mendelssohnian, one of those richly sensuous church airs; it stirred within the widow and widower vague longings for each other's agreeable society, after years of semi-solitude and the forfeiture of matrimonial bliss.

"Fredericka," said Van Ryn, "when we reach the house let us enter by the door of my office on the *stoep*. I have something to say to you."

He felt that such a proposal should not be made in the street. Mrs. Viljoen cast down her eyes, and in silence they walked along.

When they reached the house, he opened the room on the *stoep* and showed her in. Closing the door, removing his hat, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, Van Ryn said: "Fredericka, for some time past I have thought of re-marrying. You did not know it, but nevertheless it is so. I thought to myself 'there is only one woman whom I wish to marry—Mrs. Viljoen.' You did not know this either, but nevertheless it is so."

She sat radiantly but modestly mute.

"I have waited a long time to talk to you about this affair," he proceeded, "because I wanted Anita settled before . . . well, you understand, hey? Besides, there was the Predikant to talk to because your son . . . well, you know how things are in regard to him, and I had to show the Predikant that such a nice woman as you could not be *Engels gesind* (of English ideas), and of course now that the 'Sappers' are crying out against the Predikant about the Election, he is bound to be on our side over the marriage. . . . That is, of course, if you agree to what I am going to ask you. . . ?

"Then," he said, "there was also the Election—if I hadn't been made Mayor it wouldn't have been so necessary perhaps to bother you, but now of course I have to get a wife. . . . You know how the Boers talk if a man hasn't got a wife and a beard, hey?"

"*Ja*," she murmured at last.

"Well now, Fredericka, I've explained how it is—*allemach*, it's hot to-day, *neh?*—and I've talked such

a lot in the Town Hall already that I don't know how *toch* (now, what shall I say ?) "—and suddenly he blurted: "Is it 'yes' or is it 'no' ? "

"No, Johannes," she murmured, "it is 'yes.'"

* * * * *

Van Ryn did not immediately disclose the glad news. His sense of delicacy led him to feel that such an announcement in regard to himself should not clash with Anita's, and from what Huysmans had said, he was momentarily expecting to be asked for his consent to his daughter's marriage. But dinner passed; and despite alternate broad hints and coy glances from her father and Mrs. Viljoen, Anita said nothing. Indeed it was clear to the widow's unpractised but feminine eye, that some little coldness, some wall of reserve, had grown up between Huysmans and Anita.

After the meal was over Mrs. Viljoen, who, like the Mayor, felt a diffidence in regard to approaching the elder girl, confided her fears to Van Ryn. At first he said that he would speak to Anita; "then he "*ach* "-ed and "*toch* "-ed and suggested that Mrs. Viljoen should so do; and in the end it was agreed that Van Ryn should ask Huysmans for an explanation.

Over coffee on the *stoep* he did so. Huysmans said little, but Van Ryn gathered from this reserve that Anita had rejected him. He was furious, and got up impetuously to go and have it out with his daughter. "Please, Johannes . . . please, old friend, don't! Promise me you'll not speak a word to Anita of this matter. If you do, you will destroy my last hope. . . . I know her better than you do, although you are her father. And I know myself too. . . . I do not want her to marry me by force, or in order to please me or

you. I want her only if she wants me. Now leave her alone. . . . Say nothing, and I will come back to Unionstad . . . some day and speak to her again."

And it was on this understanding with Van Ryn that Huysmans left Unionstad Station two hours later, amid frantic cheering and cries of "So long" and "*Tot sijns.*"

CHAPTER XIII

SERMONS IN STORE AND CHURCH

WITH the departure of Huysmans, Van Ryn turned his thoughts seriously towards the business. The next day would be Saturday; and each week-end brought additional trade to Unionstad; the farmers rarely came in during the mid-week unless for Nachtmaal or a political speech. On Saturdays Ned Oakley had made it a rule to be in the store soon after sunrise instead of seven o'clock.

The farmers reached the dorp generally on Friday nights. Some, however, would set out from home an hour or two before dawn on Saturday; they breakfasted beside their wagons at the Market Square, and for this meal would come over to the store to buy bread, cheese, coffee, and butter. These little purchases often led to substantial orders for goods to take home; as well as to sales of produce, loaded on their wagons at the Square.

Van Ryn had been so busy up to this Friday night that he had had no time to attend to details; he instructed Gerard Achteruit, however, to be there early. But next morning when the proprietor reached the store, not only was the *oprecht* assistant invisible but he had taken the keys home with him, and the place could not be opened. The Mayor of Unionstad was annoyed, and felt ridiculous, standing there on the *stoep*, locked out of his own store. One of the coloured

boys jumped on a horse and went to Achteruit's, where he woke up the *klein baas* and got the keys. Gerard himself arrived an hour later, for he disliked leaving home without breakfast.

Van Ryn was consequently in a bad temper, which was not improved when he noticed how untidy the shop had become since Ned's departure. Nor was the ledger entered up, as it used to be.

During the day trade was extremely poor for a Saturday. This was no fault of Gerard's, though he did not improve things by his natural air of superior stupidity, the label of a poor salesman. The fact was that many of the farmers had made the Wednesday and Thursday of this week serve them for Friday and Saturday. Van Ryn had lost half of Wednesday and the whole of Thursday's trade through being closed, and now that the farmers had returned home things were much quieter than on an ordinary week-day. Johannes went into his books that night. When he saw what trade had been done since Ned's departure, he spat viciously into a corner and refilled his pipe to find consolation there. The cursed store was not turning out anything like so well as he had expected. And now these Oakleys, who had got him to buy it when the *vervloekte* thing was already bankrupt, went and left him in the lurch, with that young fool Gerard to look after the business! That was a Jingo trick, if you like . . . clearing off to the front!

Van Ryn glanced into the forepart of the store—the place was empty. Young Achteruit stood twiddling his thumbs behind the counter, though it was barely eight o'clock, usually a busy time.

"Hey, Gert," cried Van Ryn, "tell the boy to put

up the shutters. . . . I don't see the good of keeping open any more. The dorp seems to be dead!"

"Every one has gone to the Bioscope," said Gerard sulkily. He was anxious to be on his way there too. At that moment Thomas Oakley came in to buy a few things. He still dealt with Van Ryn, not only because he disapproved of coolie trading, but because dealing here was a habit, and Oakley disliked changing a habit.

Van Ryn heard the Englishman's voice saying: "What, closing already? We didn't put up the shutters so early in my time!"

So he walked out and spoke rather curtly: "Good evening, Mr. Oakley . . . what can I do for you?"

"Oh, all right . . . the young fellow can get it."

"Go on, Gert, you can go home," said Van Ryn. And as the weary intellectual brushed himself down in the office and plastered his hair nicely to meet the public gaze at the Bioscope, Johannes turned to the Englishman. "Look here, Mr. Oakley, you people always talk about 'playing the game' and 'sportsmanship.' . . . Do you consider that your son treated me fairly to go off like that on Wednesday?"

"Wasn't his time up?"

"*Ja*, his time was up, but I asked him to stay on, and he never told me straight out he wouldn't."

"I don't think he made up his mind to go until after that row with the Predikant."

"He told me it was all settled. . . . Now I wouldn't mind so much, but *he* talked me into buying this accursed store from you, and just when I'm getting troubles in the business he goes away and leaves me in the bag."

"Oh," said Oakley in a sharp voice, "you're laying it on a bit thick, aren't you? Ned went on commando during the Rebellion, and you got along all right without him."

"Business was slack then . . . we shut up half of each week . . . besides, I had another man and plenty of time to look after things myself. But now it is different. . . ."

Here the new assistant, delicately finished off with brown brogues and a green hat, passed out to the main street. When he had disappeared Van Ryn continued:

"Look what I have got to take care of the store! *Ach*, I feel so sick and tired of the whole thing that I wish I had never listened to your son when he came to talk me over."

"He didn't talk you over; you bought because you thought you'd make money. And so you would have done," he added almost with a shout, "if you hadn't mixed yourself up in this damned racialism."

"*Maar mij Heere*," cried Van Ryn, "listen to this Jingo telling me I am one! Look here, Mr. Oakley, your politics are the cause of my troubles today."

"What? . . . How do you make that out?"

"How? Quite simple. If you hadn't lost all the Afrikander customers by your Jingo tactics, you would still be here in the store and I would still be in my office."

"So that's how you look at it, is it?"

"Of course . . . and now that I'm landed with this place round my neck and your son clears off, what do I hear?"

His voice and manner were challenging; he repeated, "What do I hear about you, Mr. Oakley?"

"What do you hear?"

"I don't say it's true, of course," explained Van Ryn. "I hope not, because I can hardly believe it of a white man, even an Englishman. I hear you are a supporter of coolie trade."

"Who said that?"

"It's all over Unionstad," replied Van Ryn. "The Indian, Mahomet, says he went to see you about a new store, and you have promised to back him up in the Council."

"I told him," was Oakley's retort, "that I didn't see how the Town Council could interfere with his existing licence, and I don't see how it can either."

"You think that *smeerlap* should be allowed to keep open a store and cut our throats?"

"That's not the point," said the Englishman. "If I had my way coolie trading would never have been allowed, but under the present law any man is entitled to get a licence, and the Town Council has no right to interfere. Now this man was allowed to trade, he owns a licence, and I don't see how we can honestly refuse to let him transfer to other premises."

"Yes, we can. He built on an *erf* owned by a Jingo who refused to sell the land to me. Schlimowitz has bought the *erf*, and he has given the coolie notice to leave it; he cannot move to any other stand in Unionstad without getting our permission. Besides, his building plans have to be passed by the Council; all we need do is refuse to pass them."

"That would not be straight," contended Oakley,

with a dogged air that irritated Van Ryn. "It would be an abuse of our functions."

"Straight be damned!" Van Ryn shouted the words. "In the Orange Free State a coolie can't open a shop at all—this heathen crawls into the country like a louse before the laws were made strict enough to keep him out, and must we then let him do as he likes in our Municipality?"

"If he doesn't get fair play he can go to the Supreme Court; the man is entitled to justice."

"Fair play! Justice! I was also entitled to fair play from your son, but he *vernuiked* me while the meeting was on, and cleared off!"

Van Ryn's anger aroused Oakley's. "Damn it all," he cried, "the boy had a right to go. It's his duty to fight for King and Country."

"*Ja*," sneered Johannes, "and it's his father's duty to fight for coolie stores."

"Yes, it is," shouted Oakley, carried away by his anger. "Now you've made me realize my duty. . . . I shall do my bit here, just as the Indians are fighting for us in France!"

Van Ryn was once more on safe and familiar ground. Back on the eternal subject of the two races, he grew cool, cutting, effective. "Fighting in France!" he said. "Those coolies, with legs like a stick of Boer tobacco—*mach kerel*, they'll die like sick fowls of cold before the Germans get hold of them."

"Don't you believe it—they cut up the whole of the Prussian Guards last week," retorted Oakley.

"In Reuter's cables perhaps, and the *Unionstad News*. Oh yes, the Jingo Press is very brave, so long as they can sit in the office and shoot with ink."

"You don't believe we've beaten the Huns?" asked Oakley.

"*Ach kerel*, I've got a friend who gets the news direct from Berlin through Windhoek. He has seen with his own eyes photographs of Kitchener, Sir Edward Grey and Churchill tied fast in a fowl-hok in Germany, where they are prisoners."

Wrangling thus over all the printed and oral distortions that had been circulated since the beginning of the war, the pair of middle-aged Town Councillors in the end nearly came to blows. Van Ryn, who was not a fighting man, recovered his senses first.

"Well, Mr. Oakley," he said, "when you write to your son give him my compliments, and tell him what I have said."

Resenting this as a hint to go, Ned's father replied: "That reminds me; he told us you would be sending along his last month's salary. Shall I take it now?"

Van Ryn had really overlooked this matter—he felt needlessly annoyed at being reminded of it—in his opinion Oakley had landed a foul blow for the Allies. Counting out £16 in gold and notes, he growled: "Will you please give me a receipt?"

Oakley began to do so—then he checked the money very pointedly, and as he wrote the acknowledgment remarked: "£16 . . . ? How about the 5 per cent. of the profits?"

"Profits? The profits are so big that I'd like to sell the accursed store back to you for half what it cost me! It was the slimmest bit of business you ever did in your life, Mr. Oakley."

And so infuriated was the Englishman at this imputation of slimness (something Schlimowitz would have

taken as a compliment) that he could not find a word to say, and left the store speechless with fury, banging the door heavily behind him.

* * * * *

On the morning after this the Reverend Paulus Nicholas Justus Van Heerden delivered a very notable sermon in the Dutch Reformed Church. He had heard that one half of his congregation strongly resented their pastor's doings on Election Day, and he was by no means disposed to turn the other cheek towards them. Rather than this, the reverend gentleman girded up his loins to attack the unrighteous, smite them hip and thigh, and bring them back to the fold, humble and repentant.

He chose for his texts Psalm cxxxiii. 1 and Psalm lxxii. 9 : " Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," and " His enemies shall lick the dust."

Basing his logic apparently on the gentle philosophy of the first, and his wrath on the belligerency of the second, the Predikant fell upon " the unjust counsellors, the transgressors and the unrighteous among us, who suffering without godly patience in the evil of their hearts those things unto which the Lord directeth their footsteps, seek to stir up strife between man and man. But," he warned them, " he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends, while he that hath knowledge spareth his words."

Never before had Mijnheer's eloquence been so thunderous and flexible. From a more-in-sorrow-than-anger point of view, he proceeded to exhortation and finally to the menace of fire and brimstone. And they all knew what he meant. Who were the enemies that

should lick the dust but Ferreira, Du Plessis and their crowd ?

Of whom did the Predikant speak when he quoted Proverbs xiii. 15 : " The way of transgressors is hard " ? The Jingoes, of course.

To whom but himself could he refer when he proudly said : " Seest thou a man diligent in his business ? He shall stand before Kings ; he shall not stand before mean men."

" Kings ! " muttered Ferreira, " you will stand before the *Kerkraad* (Church Council) ! "

And he himself stood it very well until the preacher, worked up to a frenzy by the sonorous phraseology of the Old Testament, roared straight at him, so that everybody could see for whom it was meant : " How long halt ye between two opinions ? I warn you in the name of the Lord—ye cannot serve God and Mammon. O ye evil ones, harken to the counsel of the just and upright."

And then came the peroration, straight out of the second Book of Samuel, to be flung at Ferreira's face, upon which grew a neat Imperial (locally styled a *bok-baard*) instead of the full beard of the upright Boer :—

" Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown ! . . . Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their death they shall not be divided, save through the wickedness of evil counsellors, busy-bodies speaking things which they ought not. For to such I say it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea."

Here Ferreira could stand no more. He saw that all eyes in the *kerk* were fixed upon him ; and he believed

that but for the sacredness of the occasion the " Nats " would have broken into loud applause and cried out " Hoor, hoor."

He said to himself, " Not only does he sling mud at us outside, but he rubs it in when we come to kerk." And without any attempt to conceal his act, in fact with the object of drawing attention to it, Ferreira scandalized 55 per cent. of the congregation by walking out of the church.

Of course Mrs. Ferreira (*née* Oosthuisen) remained where she was; but Du Plessis tried to support his fellow councillor and would have succeeded had not his wife prevented him, through her woman's dislike of scandal merely for principle's sake.

After the service there was tremendous excitement and discussion. The congregation walked home in groups of ten and twelve, talking of only one thing.

" A splendid sermon," was the Nationalist opinion. " It should be printed and sent to every ' Sapper ' in the land."

The " Sappers," on the other hand, cried: " A disgrace to the country. Fancy preaching about a man's beard like that. We shall get a new Predikant, or start our own *kerk*."

Ferreira was waiting there, and some of the Nationalist " jongs " annoyed him further by bleating " ma-a-a ! " to remind him of his " goatee."

That night only the Nationalists attended service. On the *stoeps* and in the *voorkamers* they debated the advisability of next day holding a public indignation meeting.

Du Plessis's opinion was that the Republicans would refuse to let them use the Town Hall. On the whole

he thought it would be better to wait until they heard what action was taken by the heads of the Dutch Reformed Church, at Cape Town, before going to extremes. Meanwhile, a supplementary report should be drawn up for the local Kerkraad. A protest in reference to the Predikant's Election-Day activities had already been posted. Prospects of trouble, generally speaking, were excellent.

When the Predikant that night looked upon the half-empty church, he grew as angry as the bioscope proprietor did when he saw only a £2 house to recoup him for rent, lights, and film hire. So this was the way these stiff-necked Jingoes accepted the Lord's admonishments, uttered through the mouth of His servant! This was how they manifested humility and obedience! Very well . . . let them *pas op*—next time he would chastise them with scorpions. Again that night he thundered threats and warnings. But now he was at a disadvantage, because the sermon had been prepared in the afternoon, on the assumption that the "Sappers" would be present to-night in a contrite and submissive frame of mind. For this reason *Mijnheer* had made the second sermon a more gently chiding one than the first, indicating "mercy and forgiveness if only the recusant sinners would aid the Lord to guide their steps in the right path."

Still, considering that the thunder had to be introduced largely in the shape of "gags," it was powerfully effective, reaching the hearts of those who were present.

Oosthuisen, for example, went out of church stirred to fury. Did these ridiculous "Sappers" now think they were going to play *baas* in the *kerk*? And because

the Predikant put them in their place, they insulted him by staying away.

"Johannes," he said to Van Ryn, "we must do something in this matter."

"*Ja*, Barend, but what can we do? If the 'Sappers' want to stop away from *kerk*, how can we make them come?"

Achteruit nodded his head sagely and repeated, "*Ja*, how can we make them?"

Gerard too was there, but walking five yards ahead with Klaas Kachelhopper and Maggie. Further still in front Anita swung along, determined to be left alone.

It was a beautiful starry night, cool and refreshing after the heat of the day. The scent of the newly-watered soil rose to their nostrils, for a heavy shower had fallen during the service. From neighbouring gardens came the faint perfume of innumerable peach trees, mingled with the pungent odour of mint. Anita stood still, drew in a long breath and sighed. Gerard was now close behind her.

"What's the matter, hey?" he asked. "Aren't you feeling well, Miss Van Ryn?"

"Oh," she exclaimed, too moved by the beauty of the night even to feel malicious towards him—"the peaches . . . how one smells them after the rain!"

"Yes," said Gerard, "I don't care much for these late yellow peaches either—they are only good for the pigs or to make brandy with."

"Jong," added Klaas, "English people, I hear, make jam of them also."

Further at the back rose the contentious sound of parental voices.

"Johannes," declared Oosthuisen, "we must hold a meeting."

"A meeting, Barend? What for?"

"To protest against this boycotting business. It's a khaki trick, Johannes—boycotting is a thing the English invented . . . a sort of strike."

"*Ja*, that may be so, Barend, but we can laugh at it because if they stop away from the *kerk*, they'll go to hell when they die, and won't have a vote any more. Besides, I want to call a public meeting first over this coolie question. We must pass a resolution asking Parliament to make stronger laws and shut up all Indian stores. That *schelm* over there"—he pointed to Mahomet's building—"claims the right to trade because he bought a licence a few years ago, and nobody objected; but now he has got to clear out."

And he denounced Indian trading, General Smuts and the British Empire for five minutes.

"All right, old friend," said Oosthuisen, "let us hold one meeting for the two purposes. We can protest against the 'Sappers' boycotting the *kerk*, and pass a resolution at the same time to boycott the coolie."

When the party reached the gate Anita very decidedly said "Good night" and turned towards the *stoep*.

"Aren't you going to ask our friends to have some coffee, Anita?"

"Maggie will do that, father; I'm going straight to bed—I have a headache."

As she went up the steps Gerard said:

"It comes from the smell of those yellow peaches. She said they whiffed a bit."

"*Ja*," agreed Klaas, "I'd as soon smell *stink blaa*" (a noxious-smelling plant).

Gerard was shocked at the use of that word "stink." "Klaas," he said later, "you should never use the word 'stink' in front of ladies. It's absolutely against all etiquette."

Next day the Predikant heard that the "Sappers" were talking about an indignation meeting, in the event of their failing to get satisfaction from the Kerkraad. And Mijnheer at first was so infuriated that Achteruit, his informant, recalled stories he had heard of the Zulu King Chaka, who invariably ordered the bearers of evil tidings to be put to death. Achteruit pointed out his own innocence, and gradually brought the Predikant to see that slim tactics would prevail over the enemy. And as the leading exponent of *slimheid* in Unionstad, Councillor Achteruit considered his advice to be particularly valuable just now.

"Mijnheer," he said, "I can stop that meeting if it is desired."

"Let them dare," roared the Predikant, "let them dare to do such a thing! And if they do, then may the Lord have mercy on their souls!"

He said this exactly as he had heard it said by the Circuit Judge, at the last Court, when sentencing a murderer to death. Then he added, "How would you stop the meeting?"

"Mijnheer," replied Achteruit, "I am a member of the General Purposes Committee in the Town Council. When they apply for permission to use the Town Hall we shall vote against it."

"Have you the majority?"

"Yes, Mijnheer, on every committee."

The Predikant sat back in his chair, closed his eyes, and for a few moments was absorbed in deep thought. Separating his fingers, he clenched the right hand and firmly smote the table. "Let them dare," he roared. "I am ready for them—I will myself attend their meeting!"

Then, after a pause, more gently, "You will speak to all your fellow committee-men before the application is considered?"

"Yes, Mijnheer."

"You see, Achteruit, I have to keep my hands clean from politics."

Later in the day the Predikant determined to pay his usual call on Oom Kaspar, who was well known to be a wobbler in his politics and afraid of the power of the Kerk.

Oom Kaspar could not pretend that he was out, as Mijnheer caught him dozing behind the sun-blinds on the *stoep*.

"Oom," he asked, "how is it that I did not see you in the *kerk* last night?"

"*Ja nie*, Mijnheer, I was not there."

"That I knew, Oom—why?"

Oom Kaspar coughed and fidgetted, "um"-ed and "ah"-ed. Confronted by the Predikant's energetic character, he was nervous and could not look Mijnheer in the eye.

"Why were you not in the *kerk*, Oom Kaspar?"

"Mijnheer . . . er . . . ah . . . Mijnheer, I was sick."

"O . . . . . h! But your wife, where was she? . . . I did not see her either. Was she also sick?"

"*Ja nie*, Mijnheer; she stopped at home to look after me."

"Is that the only reason you stayed away, Oom Kaspar?"

"*Ja*, Mijnheer."

At that moment Mrs. Van Koeker came out on the *stoep*. With the superior cunning of her sex she advanced graciously to welcome the Predikant, calling to the maid at the same time to bring coffee. Oom Kaspar wriggled miserably in his armchair. There was no chance to arrange anything.

"I hope, Mrs. Van Koeker, you are feeling better to-day."

She snatched with quick feminine perception at the bait—of course Kaspar must have said *she* was ill last night.

"I feel quite well again, Mijnheer, after the nice rain last night; it was the heat yesterday I think that upset me. I was *toch* so sorry to miss the sermon last night; I hear it was splendid."

The Predikant passed no immediate comment, but when Mrs. Van Koeker went away to see about the coffee, he turned and murmured: "Oom Kaspar, 'Great is truth and mighty above all things'."

The Town Councillor made no reply—if he was going to be found out like this, what was the use?

"Oom Kaspar . . . what is this I hear about a meeting against me?"

"Nay, Mijnheer, I do not know of any meeting."

"There is also talk of Supreme Court actions and other godless stupidity."

"Nay, Mijnheer, of such things I am innocent."

"Oom Kaspar, beware lest your loyalty to King

George lead you into displeasing the dear Lord."

Then raising his eyes aloft, he murmured with extreme unction, " For the Lord thy God is a jealous God, Oom Kaspar."

Coffee and *komfyt* here arrived and diverted the Predikant's thoughts into more comforting channels. Oom Kaspar groaned as he saw how the conserved pick of last season's *naartjes* was vanishing before the formidable attacks of the Church. Sugar was, *ach*, so dear . . . already it was up to a *tickey* (3*d*.) per pound; he wished his wife would not boil her fruit so long and with so much syrup. Woman's vanity, of course; she wanted to have the best *komfyt* in the dorp on her table, but he had to pay for it.

At length Mijnheer wiped his mouth, got up and said " *dag*." Then he stood, balanced for a few moments on the edge of the *stoep*, and whispered for Oom Kaspar's ears alone: " The prudent man looketh well to his going."

And he went carefully down the steps, brushing aside with his foot a piece of gravel that might have caused him to slip.

CHAPTER XIV

ANITA DISCOVERS HER SECRET

THE summer rains had ceased to fall, leaves were dropping from the peach trees in the little gardens of the dorp, and already the veld outside was dry and dusty at the approach of winter. There was not the sweet sadness of an English autumn in the air, not the haze and the silence, nor the brown trees. Within the little town was no vegetation but that of the summer gardens; and outside the whole of life was dependent on the veld, which came up green and tender after each shower, and stood erect until eaten down by the sheep and cattle.

But if autumn itself brought no sadness to Unionstad in general, it seemed to be not without an effect upon Anita. The days which now passed—instead of being shorter—she found longer and more tedious than any since her return from the Seminary. Most of her spare time Anita spent in reading, but since her father had become the Mayor she was compelled to devote herself more than before to house-keeping and entertainment. She realized that this was a duty that she owed; and in spite of what she suffered hearing all the petty scandal of the dorp, did her best to listen without passing remarks that would make fresh enemies for Van Ryn.

Strange persons called, people whom nobody could have imagined playing at Society. For example,

there was O'Flinnigan who put on a tail coat and bowler hat one suffocating day, and darted in to "pay his respects." Anita marvelled at the appearance of that uncouth but not uninteresting man; could he, she wondered, with his professional cynicism, assume this make-believe of amenity, with a frock-coat and visiting-card to conceal the malice of his nature? Or did he flaunt these things in the face of Unionstad just as he waved that weathercock, a symbol of his frank insincerity? Still, if O'Flinnigan wrote like the fifth-rate literary failure that he knew he was, wallowing in the malice and envy of dorp journalism, at least he talked of George Moore and Yeats, as well as of Piette Loti and Flaubert; and by so doing directed Anita's attention to the great things of literature which had been studiously kept from her by her paid teachers.

And after devouring all that she could of these writers, and those others suggested by her reading of them, she forgave much to the poor derelict of newspaperdom stranded there upon the sterile shores of Unionstad. And she wondered how he could go on writing the poor stuff he did, for her knowledge of life was as yet far less than that of the books she now daily read; nor did she know the power of thirst and hunger in the creation of souls.

Van Ryn, after the departure of Huysmans, felt it was time that he announced his forthcoming marriage; and he duly did so. The two girls took it very well on the whole, though Maggie in secret poked much fun at Mrs. Viljoen's veneration for death, which she hoped would not lead to the bride's putting on widow's weeds for the wedding day, etc., etc. But apart from this ridiculous little trait, which really endeared her

to Maggie, because it provided food for mockery, Mrs. Viljoen was well liked by Van Ryn's daughters.

Anita felt that their father should either have remarried long ago, or not done so at all, but otherwise saw nothing against the marriage, which she regarded merely as an insurance against the loneliness of old age. So far as any feelings of jealousy were concerned, or the commonplace objection to "playing second fiddle," Anita was above such pettiness. And so she made Mrs. Viljoen feel that she would be welcomed when she came; and each day told Maggie "not to mock so."

The wedding was announced for September; meanwhile the widow would stay on her farm, which had to be cleaned up for the sale of surplus live-stock, though the place itself was not to be sold until after Mrs. Viljoen's "khaki son" had come home from German West Africa, where he was with one of Botha's commandoes.

Ned Oakley was with the same army. His sudden departure from Unionstad had enabled him to reach Cape Town in time to join, and now he was advancing over the desert with others who had seen the Rebellion end four months before in the Transvaal.

The successive stages of Botha's advance provided the material for tremendous debates on the *stoeps* of South Africa. In Unionstad the subject of these victories at times eclipsed even the Kerk question which had developed out of the Election. Thomas Oakley was naturally pleased; his elation showed itself now and then in the exhibition of a second flag over his house, and sometimes he said belligerently, "It'll soon be over now," meaning the war in Europe. His jubilation in regard to Botha's army led him into dis-

putes even with the "Sappers," for Oakley would insist on speaking of "the British troops," at which they corrected him with "you mean the Union Forces."

Anita went to see Mrs. Oakley one day, perhaps hoping to get news, though there was nothing in her mind but a vague longing to speak of Ned to somebody who knew and liked him. The only other person with whom she could discuss the subject was Maggie; but some natural reserve prevented her from revealing this side of herself to her sister, while Maggie too was reticent, seeming to divine a secret attitude towards the young Englishman of which Anita herself was unconscious.

Van Ryn had, of course, since the night of Ned's departure remained in a state of obstinate alienation, but in any case he was the last person to whom Anita would have gone for understanding in a matter so delicate.

Mrs. Oakley was found knitting warm socks in the parlour. She knew that it would be winter soon, and she subconsciously assumed that it would be cold, although none of the twenty-five winters that she had passed in South Africa had been so. Still winter to her meant frost and snow; besides, there was her boy at the front and he should have thick wool to keep out the chills.

"Oh, Miss Van Ryn . . . what a pleasant surprise . . . will you come in?"

They sat down together and talked of the weather, the crops, and then the war; from that, of course, they passed naturally to the subject on which both wanted most to speak. The mother could not conceal her inward anxiety, though Oakley had taught her that to display emotion was French or Dutch, anything

except English. "But isn't it splendid the way Botha is advancing?" she said, and just then Oakley himself came in.

He did not receive Anita quite so amiably as his wife had done; that last row with Van Ryn and the imputation of slimness, still rankled in him. After a rather formal but quite polite greeting he turned beaming upon his wife: "They're at Keetmanshoop to-day, mother!"

"Keetmanshoop! . . . let's see, Dad, that's not on Ned's line, is it?"

"No," he said. "Our boy's with the Central Column. They'll be along too, pretty soon, and then these murderers and poisoners will be cut up as they deserve. We'll teach 'em what cold steel tastes like, eh!"

He glowed at the prospect, in that benevolent manner so typical of kindly men who can never kill anybody or anything, but who long to pass for blood-thirsty fiends.

"When did you hear last from your son, Mr. Oakley?"

"Let me see," he replied; "about a week ago. I've got the letter inside somewhere . . . what's to-day, April 21—eh, by Jove, mother, it's time we had a fire in the parlour. Can't you ever remember winter begins in May out here?"

As he left the room Anita said to Mrs. Oakley: "When you are writing to your son next, will you give him my kindest regards?"

And having done so she felt like a person who had performed a difficult task for which some great effort of will had to be summoned. Mrs. Oakley looked

curiously at Anita. She knew that Ned liked this girl, that he had walked frequently to and from the tennis-courts with her, quite a lot for one so indifferent to women as he. In a feminine way she began to wonder if Anita were attracted by her son, too; and the possibility of this created in her heart not anger or jealousy but almost affection.

Oakley came back with the letter, which had been written just prior to Ned's leaving Cape Town, and Mrs. Oakley read extracts from it. Anita noticed with a sharp sense of disappointment that Ned asked to be remembered to various persons in Unionstad, but that he made no mention whatever of her, though he spoke of the store and hoped things were going on all right there.

"Going on all right!" cried Oakley. "Not so long as they have a Dutch 'jong' there!" His tone was contemptuous, and most of the sneer went by stress into the word "Dutch." This cut Anita to the quick; she felt almost a sense of physical pain as though slashed by a whip. Anita disliked Gerard Achteruit intensely, which was more than Oakley did; but she could not allow the reflection on her race to pass. Afterwards perhaps she would admit that she was "touchy," but now . . .

"The young man who looks after the store," she said, "is not my ideal of a business man, nor my father's, but he is none the worse for being Dutch."

"I never knew a Dutchman worth tuppence in business," replied Oakley, trying to be jocular.

"No . . . we are not a nation of shopkeepers."

"You're not a nation at all," he cried, the eternal race question destroying his finer feelings and sharpen-

ing his tongue. "But some of you'd like to be by rebellion and treachery!"

"Tom, Tom!" cried poor Mrs. Oakley.

Anita coldly replied: "Still, we are good enough to send into German West to fight for you!"

"That isn't being done by the Nationalists," he said. "That is the work of Botha and the British South Africans. Why, you have only to look at these photographs of the boys for German West to see what *they* are . . . British or British trained."

Pointing to a group on the wall, he continued: "Not much like the Boers we saw in the last war with their *veldschoens* and Mausers . . . these young Dutchmen might pass for British."

"Yes," she said cuttingly, "they do. They have already forgotten that twelve years ago their fathers were fighting against the British."

"Do you blame them for taking up arms to-day?"

"Yes, I do! In my opinion it is indecent. And as for such Boers being fine or smart to look at, why, every true Afrikander girl despises them!"

"Yes, they prefer the Englishmen, eh?"

This meaningless and unpremeditated sneer, which Oakley had flung at her to score an obvious point, had the most extraordinary effect upon Anita. She stood speechless, pale and quivering first; then red with a hot sense as though of personal shame. In an instant it flashed through her that Thomas Oakley was coarsely jeering at her most sacred inmost feelings in regard to his son, out of some knowledge that he possessed. Why had he done this? How did he discover what she herself had not actually known until that very

moment ? Had she made herself so cheap that people could justifiably insult her ?

This exaggerated view was, of course, entirely due to Anita's sudden self-revelation that she loved Ned Oakley deeply and passionately. It seemed to her that all the world must know what she now did ; and she felt that Thomas Oakley's brutal remark was a direct allusion to her.

For the fraction of a second this proud, strong, sensitive girl trembled on the verge of tears ; then with head erect she looked scornfully at Ned's father and passed out of the house.

" Oh, Dad, how could you ! "—and Mrs. Oakley sat down and sobbed.

" Serve her right ! " he roared. " Damned little spitfire ! Rebel ! Let her go, and good riddance to her. You don't want our boy hanging around any Boer *meisjes*, do you ! " And suddenly, in the way that his words always led him on, from one idea to another, he added, " Damme if I don't believe she was after him ! "

Anita walked swiftly away, in the direction of the veld. She had no wish to return home then ; her agitation was so great she felt it was bound to be noticed. Every moment tears sprang into her eyes, she wiped them and walked on, anger preventing her thoughts from concentrating on her sorrow. The short brown tufts of grass scrunched under her feet, then the sheep ran away, bleating, followed by the large ungainly lambs. A great gaunt goat tugged viciously at a dry thorn bush, not moving aside until Anita, who had not looked where she was going, walked right into him. The goat gave a harsh male cry and

followed the sheep, while Anita sat down beside the broken bush and sobbed out her sorrow.

After a while she became calmer, and then began the agonies of analysis. One question kept repeating itself through her throbbing brain: "Why had Ned's father said that?"

And the answer kept coming back in the form of a vague suggestion, which at first she kept away from her consciousness, determinedly breaking it up before it could assume the shape of a complete phrase in her mind. But at length the evil thing passed the barriers of definition and with a sense of shame Anita asked herself: Did he, in his mortification caused by her innocent and natural liking for Huysmans, speak scornfully or lightly of her to his parents?

It seemed incredible that Ned could have done this, and yet in her heart, the shame of the act was almost excused by his feeling for her which it would reveal. But when she found herself thinking like this, Anita was suffused in a sense of shame, just as one feels when hideous uncontrollable thoughts pass willy-nilly through the mind. Oh, why was she made like this! Why could she not feel differently, nobly!

And then suddenly she asked herself, "Why do I not care for Jan Huysmans? Why do I not force myself to care for him? He is so lonely and he loves me so much. He is true, tender, noble. He needs me in his life, it would help him so greatly in his career. And I, who claim to love my country and my people, cannot even give myself to the man amongst them whom I admire most. Am I then so in love with this Englishman?"

"What sort of an Afrikander am I?" again she asked

herself. "Surely I should make this sacrifice. I must make it; I will make it!"

She was hastening homewards now, slipping from one knot of grass to the other until she reached the road. "I shall learn to care for him," she kept saying. "I do care for him; it would please my father too, and all our friends."

She forced herself not to think of Ned; she developed a factitious anger when in spite of herself his image arose before her. She thought of Thomas Oakley instead, of his bigoted Jingoism, his insults. Oh, she hated him, hated him! She would never be able not to hate him—to her he epitomized the arrogant stupidity of his race, and his son no doubt was like him, inside. He pretended, perhaps, to be friendly with the Boers and to like them, but probably he was a Jingo at heart. All the English were, except Gladstone, and his people in South Africa had disowned him for it. Oh yes, to please her Ned Oakley might pretend, but were the English not notorious hypocrites? Most likely he wore a Union Jack next to his heart, tattooed on, perhaps, round a picture of the Prince of Wales or Lord Milner.

She reached home and at once sat down to write:

"My dear Friend,—

"It is now a month since you left us, and in that long period I have heard only three times from you. Why do you not write oftener to me? You know how I look forward to your letters, but they are so short. . . ."

Then she stopped and nervously biting the penholder began to think . . . no, it needed no thinking. She had thought it all out. Presently she again set herself to write.

"I have been thinking, my friend, of something you wanted to ask me that last day when we sat together under the vine. The leaves now are all fallen, the grapes have shrivelled away, and soon it will be winter. I feel very lonely and discouraged; why don't you come to see me, Jan? There will be no Parliament and you can leave Cape Town. I want your companionship so much.

"Believe me, sincerely,
"ANITA."

As soon as she had signed the letter, Anita addressed an envelope and then sealed and stamped it. She called to Sara, the housemaid, and told her to hurry to the post office. Then she went to her room and lay down with her face in the pillows.

Two hours later she said to the girl: "Sara, did you post that letter?"

"*Ja*, meesees."

"Are you sure, Sara . . . where?"

"By der pos' office, meesees."

It was already after five o'clock—the office closed at 5.30. Anita hurried down the street. . . . She would be in time. At the counter she spoke to the clerk in English: "Mr. De Villiers, I sent a letter to be posted this afternoon; there is something in it . . . that was enclosed by mistake . . . a letter for somebody else. Could you please let me have the letter back?"

"It's strictly against the rules, Miss Van Ryn; I can do nothing now."

"Oh, please, Mr. De Villiers—I can describe the envelope; it was addressed to Mr. Jan Huysmans,

M.L.A., House of Assembly, Cape Town. There was . . . "

"I'm sorry I can't go against the regulations, Miss Van Ryn. You can ask the postmaster, if you like."

That official listened gravely to Anita, who now spoke Dutch. The clerk stood by—he was a "Sapper," his superior a Nationalist, at heart. Each narrowly watched the other. The postmaster "hum"-ed and "ha"-ed; if only De Villiers would go away he could do the Van Ryns this little service. But the clerk would not go. Finally the postmaster, to prove his friendship, said: "Mr. De Villiers, just let me see the letter Miss Van Ryn speaks of."

But De Villiers replied, "I'm sorry, the mail is already made up."

He pointed to a waxed bag that lay on the floor; the postmaster murmured his regrets, and Anita, pretending that it did not matter, went sadly out of the office.

A few minutes afterwards, as De Villiers was clearing the late-box, a black hand thrust inside just such an envelope as Miss Van Ryn had described. "By Jove," he said, "the damned nigger's only just posted it."

He gathered up with the rest the letter for Jan Huysmans, M.L.A., and flung it upon the table to be sorted. Then he went home to tea.

Four days later Anita received a letter from Cape Town which she carried to her room and opened with feelings of sacrilege.

"My dear Anita,—

"Nothing in my life has given me so much joy

as the strange, surprising letter which arrived from you to-day. If I did not know every line of your handwriting, every twist and turn of your pen, I should have thought it was a cruel hoax. Do not think me ungrateful for what you have written. I could go down on my knees and thank God for that one sheet of paper. But, Anita, tell me—did you write because you were sad, or were you sad because you wrote?

"I say this because there is an under-current of such melancholy in every line. So I shall wait until you write me again, and if later on you express the same sentiments, and ask me to return just as beautifully as you do now, I will go to you at once. But, Anita, I fear that it was only a passing fit of sadness which made you think you needed me, or perhaps something else that I cannot even divine. If I am right, do not tell me so—let me keep, at all events, this one illusion. I too am lonely, but, for the present, happy with it, because I have your letter next to my heart.

"In deep sincerity,

"JAN HUYSMANS."

* * * * *

The days passed more slowly than ever now. To Anita they were an interminable drag, though the dorp lived in a fever of excitement caused by the march of events in German West, the almost daily surrenders there; the battles in Europe, each one converted into a new Waterloo by O'Flinnigan; and, above all, by the struggle of the Predikant's supporters and his opponents.

An important functionary of the *kerk* was coming from Cape Town in the hope of reconciling the warring factions.

As yet no public meeting had been held; the Town Hall had been duly refused for such a purpose by the General Purposes Committee; and the Council upheld this decision. Then Ferreira said they would use the schoolroom, for the S.A. Party still had a majority on the School Board. This started a second great controversy which before long had become celebrated throughout the district under the name of the "Bobbejaan Kwestie," or Baboon Question. An attack on the Principal of the Government School opened it. He was a notorious "Sapper," put into his position as much for his views, which were narrow, as for his talents, which were considerable. Mr. Dusseau, that was his name, did not take long to give offence to certain people.

Achteruit, for one, complained that his youngest son had come home talking about the "world turning on his axle," and not knowing what this meant the father went to the Predikant to ask for an explanation. "Mijnheer," he said, "you tell us in the *kerk* that the world stands on his pillars, and here this *kerel* Dusseau says the world turns on an axle like a cart round the sun."

The Predikant had no wish to enter over-deeply into the mysteries of Science, nor to explain away its conflict with Scripture, so he said, "Perhaps the child did not understand, children are not always as clever as their parents."

This rare compliment on his intelligence somewhat calmed Achteruit, and he went away, more or less satisfied.

But now that the schoolroom was going to be used as a meeting-place for the "Sappers" to attack the Church from, Achteruit closely questioned his child

each day, and at last it came out that Mr. Dusseau had taken the boys to the veld, shown them rocks and fossils, and taught them ungodly things against the Scriptures.

"And, *pa*," said Klein Koos, "he said we were once *bobbejaane* (apes)."

"What?"

"*Ja, pa,* he said so."

"You mean to tell me, Koosie, that . . . ?"

"*Ja, pa,* he said we were descendants of baboons."

"Is the man mad, or was he trying to insult me or your *ma!* . . . Koosie, come along."

And he took the boy before the Reverend Mr. Van Heerden. Koosie stoutly stuck to his story, though he could see that the Predikant was very, very angry, while *pa* kept feeling the Kruger beard which encircled his face, and once peeped hurriedly into the mirror of a polished panel, as though trying to look at himself in a glass. Koosie supplied names and days; there were other boys who could bear out what he said—the Predikant made notes and promised an early investigation. Achteruit went away in a condition of tremulous excitement mingled with anger. Such a thing as this *Bobbejaan* talk was unprecedented. He had never heard of Darwin in the Town Council, nor of the theory of evolution, though like everybody else he had done much scientific research in connection with other people's antecedents, and in this his wife helped him. She was indeed always discovering somebody fresh whose great-grandmother had been either a Hottentot or a Kafir. But Mrs. Achteruit had never gone so far back as the baboons, even with "Sapper" families.

Soon everybody was talking about the "Bobbejaan

Kwestie," and long before the "Sapper" minority of Church members could hold their meeting in the schoolroom, the "Nats" had informally assembled at Van Ryn's store.

"*Kerels*," remarked the Mayor, who found himself in the chair, a sack of Natal beans, and unconsciously presiding, "let us have a cool discussion of the business in hand without bitterness or personalities."

"Mijnheer Voorzitter!" Achteruit rose as if he too were in the Council. "How can I keep cool when I think of what this *kerel* Dusseau has told my young son?"

"What did he say, Willem? Tell the meeting."

"He said there was *bobbejaan* blood in all of us, even in my family! *Ja!* now I have heard of English blood and coloured blood; but I ask you *kerels*, do I look like a baboon?"

Instead of the terrifying roar of mingled rage and sympathy which he expected, there arose only a shriek of laughter, Van Ryn being so amused that he fell off the sack of beans.

"Do I look like a man with baboon blood in his veins?" continued Achteruit, but nobody replied, for at the moment the force of Darwin's theory was for the first time apparent; and it was being seriously considered by the most *oprecht*.

"Look at my son Gerard over there behind the counter—does he look like a *bobbejaan*?"

For ten minutes without a stop Achteruit heaped abuse on "Dusseau, that rascal who teaches against the Dear Lord and the Predikant; who says the world is round like a Boer orange, and turns on his axle."

He was followed by Oosthuisen, who, when not

covertly examining Achteruit's features, was equally violent of speech. And lastly came not Van Ryn, or any other "Nat," but Oom Kaspar!

He walked straight into the circle from the street—perhaps he had been listening at the window—and, before anyone could challenge his right to be there, said:

"*Mijnheer Voorzitter*, I agree with everything that has been said about the schoolmaster" (surprised "hoor, hoors"). "In ordinary matters I am absolutely impartial, but when it comes to a question like this, when a schoolmaster tells our innocent children that the Holy Book is wrong, then I stand for no party but for right."

Now the store rang with cheers; Van Ryn tapped a two-pound weight on the counter, and Oosthuisen stamped the floor until the confectionery bottles on the shelf rattled.

In the midst of the enthusiasm, Oom Kaspar took a large handful of dried fruit, and with a peach in his mouth walked firmly out of the store. "What does it mean," they asked each other? Oom Kaspar must have had a fall-out with the "Sappers"; that meant a majority of two in the Town Council instead of one; and a tie in the School Board.

But next day when Achteruit made careful overtures, Oom Kaspar replied: "Nay, nay, Willem—I am still South African Party, but when my side is wrong I say so."

Van Ryn saw through the dodge. . . . Oom Kaspar, who had always been a *Ja-broer* ("yes-brother"), wanted to keep on the right side of the Nationalists, now that they had a majority; and at the same time

please the Predikant. Besides, he hated the schoolmaster's impious teachings as much as anybody else did—" to me," he said, " Darwin's Theory of Revolution is the work of Satan." Hence his appearance in Van Ryn's store and that amazing speech, which he explained away on the ground that his " deepest religious feelings had been shocked."

" I went in there to buy a pound of dry peaches," he said, " but when I heard of the awful things that Dusseau taught the children, I couldn't keep my mouth shut. No, I will still vote ' Sapper ' in the Council, but don't ask me to say that the Holy Book is full of lies, because I am a Christian, and I can't do it."

The day after this, the long-expected *kerk* ambassador arrived. He had received an urgent call from some of the cooler citizens ; they told him there was no prospect of reconciliation at all unless he came at once.

Private meetings, trips to and from the Parsonage, talks on the *stoep*, and earnest conversations at street corners, were the prelude to a general meeting of the Church Council.

The Ambassador wished to avoid the public washing of dirty linen ; he was a diplomatist by trade and preferred secrecy, though the *Unionstad News* entered a dignified protest.

Nothing would have suited O'Flinnigan better than a public debate on the Political Predikant, and the " Bobbejaan Kwestie." He could fill his paper with it, sell the " rag " like new mebos, and not offend a soul. But the quarrelling Boers seemed for once to smell a rat ; perhaps on one side their suspicions were awakened by the Reverend Mr. Van Heerden, who had no wish for his political activities to become public pro-

perty, and the subject for jeering and sneering articles in the Jingo Press. On the other hand, the "Sappers" were feeling more than a little uneasy over the "Bobbejaan Kwestie"; Du Plessis had already gone to Mr. Dusseau and asked him if he could not explain to the School Board that he had only been joking about the baboons.

"You see, Mr. Dusseau—when it comes to denying the Bible, parents will say we have no right to engage a schoolmaster of such ideas."

Dusseau realized the position; he said he was sorry that he had even spoken to the children of Evolution, etc., etc.

"*I* know," cried Du Plessis, "I've got it—say it was a parable; they all like parables."

"But that would be a lie. . . . I could not say that; I refuse to stultify myself."

Du Plessis talked long and earnestly to him; nobody ever heard the details, but *Conciliatie* was in the air—war would inevitably break out again—but meanwhile both parties were for peace. They had no heart for the fight once it diverged from the straight and narrow line of racialism. Religion, the Holy Book, the Church were involved. No, no, the matter must be settled.

A week later Mr. Dusseau went on "a holiday." His place was filled by a Hollander who, both in his private and in his political life, conducted himself as irreproachably as an hermaphrodite. Dusseau never returned to Unionstad, some wise official in the Education Department sent him to a school on the outskirts of Johannesburg, where his Darwinian theories could offend nobody but the baboons.

In the dorp the Bobbejaan Kwestie and the Kerk

Kwestie were simmering down; soon they would die of inanition and be forgotten, like everything else in Unionstad which lacked the vitality of racialism. The "Sappers" walked around muttering: "All right, so long as the Predikant leaves politics alone"; and the "Nats" murmured to each other: "They soon got that Bobbejaan of a schoolmaster away when they saw how it was with us."

Even the Predikant was full of peace and goodwill to nearly all men; when asked nervously by Achteruit if he would consent to overlook the conduct of the "Sappers" and readmit them to the fold, Mijnheer raised his hands and said:

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

And in German West, Botha took Windhoek, while in Europe the Allies prepared for the Spring Offensive.

* * * * *

CHAPTER XV

"The Jews, as every one admits,
Are all you say, Rabinowitz, . . .
In fact there are not any flies
Upon their business enterprise."
—"*Rip Van Winkle.*"

THE notice to leave his *erf*, which Schlimowitz had given the Indian, was due to expire at the end of May; and anxiously Van Ryn awaited the result. He asked himself many times daily: Will the coolie clear out, or will he try to start anew? Will the Jew carry on the store, or will he come to me, and offer the land at a terrible price?

Van Ryn wondered, too, how Schlimowitz was financially situated; people were always saying "that Jew will go bankrupt soon," but the fellow seemed to flourish on such prophecies.

Immediately after their quarrel Van Ryn had called up the bond on the *erf*; but until three months had expired he would not know whether Schlimowitz was worth the £500 which would enable him to retain the land.

The uneasy thought absorbed him that the Jew had borrowed the money not because he was without any of his own, but because it paid him to borrow at 8 per cent. and turn his own money over and over again buying and selling. Why, the £100 profit on the *erf* alone would have brought him 20 per cent. in one month, and yet the rascal would not sell.

Curiously enough Van Ryn even now did not dislike Schlimowitz. The genial rascality of the Jew failed to irritate or antagonize him; there was fundamentally

nothing antipathic about the man. Ah . . . if he had been an Englishman it would be different. In his rather vague fashion Van Ryn tried to analyse this: why was it that he could not meet Oakley without feeling "the hair rise on his back," Oakley, who was honest, manly and upright (in his own English way); while this *vernuiker* of a Jew could come along and play dirty tricks with impunity? He could not account for it except that the English were so confoundedly *hoogmoedig* (haughty). They came into other people's countries, *verdom*, and tried to be *baas*, ride the high horse . . . no, that he could not stand!

For since that night when, in his temper, he had practically accused Oakley of tricking him into the purchase of the store, Van Ryn felt a keen sense of remorse; and he would have welcomed an opportunity to make amends for a statement that he knew to be untrue. But he was not going to apologize to an Englishman!

During these attempts to define his antipathy to the English, he fluttered all around the true cause of his tolerance towards Schlimowitz, and of his intolerance to Oakley. Yes, he floundered about the truth without ever alighting right on it, for his mind was not logical enough to inform his heart that Oakley's uncompromising attitude on race questions was what awakened and fed his own stubborn hostility.

Now Schlimowitz never argued or said "No" to his "Yes." One could talk to the Jew; he always had a soft answer to turn away wrath, though without doubt he was a *schelm*. Yes, why was it the English were so different? Van Ryn had noticed that even the few combative, argumentative, cocksure Hebrews

whom he met were English Jews. It seemed to him that no sooner did a man become English, even by adoption, than he developed those habits of "*baasing-up*" other people.

In this way, from time to time, Johannes Van Ryn philosophized, until the day arrived for Mahomet to give up the *erf* to Schlimowitz. Diligent inquiries in the dorp were made all day; the Town Clerk knew of no application for leave to erect premises anywhere; no building plans had come in; Aasvogel's clerk, who was a Nationalist at heart, told Van Ryn that his chief had had no instructions of any kind on the coolie's behalf for a transfer of licence.

What was up? What was going to happen? It must be as he had heard—Schlimowitz would go on with the store. But the Magistrate's clerk said that no new licence had been issued, and it was now closing time at the Government offices.

The sun went down, the shutters went up; Mahomet and his family retired peacefully to rest; he chanting falsetto praise of his famous ancestor; his wife leaned over a pot of rice; the second son sprawled in a corner apparently combing his oily black hair with a pine-apple that had not yet been sold. Peace and joy prevailed in that tin house beneath the Southern Cross.

* * * * *

Next morning the sun came up, the shutters went down. Mahomet and his family reversed the process of the night before; the pine-apple went back into stock . . . soon the cheerful sounds of money-making were again heard.

At eight o'clock a Cape cart, drawn by two animated horses, stopped outside.

Schlimowitz, rubbing his hands briskly in the dry sharp air of winter, got down; and after him came a younger man; slighter, darker, paler—less in every way, and particularly in the abounding vitality and humanity of the older Jew.

"Come along, Sam." Schlimowitz scuttled into the corrugated building, where Mahomet and his sons shivered in those calico trousers and flowing shirts of the coolie, neither savage nor civilized, which make one inevitably think the wearers have just rolled out of bed and forgotten to dress. But already business was doing; a coloured woman took her daily portion of snuff away in a tiny paper, as well as a quarter of a pound of coffee at 1*s.* 3*d.* per lb. And a Kafir was pricing blankets, for he, too, was cold.

"Mr. Sam Platsky, my future brother-in-law!"

The Oriental welcomed the young man as though he were a prodigal son; Joe looked at him suspiciously, wondering if he thought that sort of *smoojing* would take *him* in. He had been prepared for the wiles of Mahomet by Schlimowitz; though this was scarcely necessary, and now shook hands amiably enough, but with some reserve, as if to say, "I'm watching you." Besides, Sam had been born on the Rand, he was a British subject, not a Russian Yid like his father. "If you are born in a stable you're not necessarily a horse, but if you're a Russian Jew you're not one so long as you aren't born in Russia." Roughly this summed up a large part of young Platsky's vague religious reliefs—he was not a particularly pious youth, and barely went to school, nor did he fast at Passover or refrain from eating bacon. But he was excellent at buying bankrupt or salvaged stock.

They all walked round the shop. "You take cup of coffee, sar?" said Mahomet.

"No, tank you—ve've just had ah good breakfast by die hotel. Are you ready, Sam?" The young one nodded. He had a note-book in his hand, and he eyed the store appraisingly.

"What do you want to do, sar?"

"Oh, it's all right . . . we're not going to take stock . . . yet." Then in Yiddish: "Sam . . . get down a rough estimate of the shelves." Turning to Mahomet: "You see, I want an idea of vat you've got, because I'm going to put more stuff in and knock spots off Oom Johannes, . . . How about tinned salmon? Don't the niggers come at it in this district? Milk—got plenty condensed milk? I bought fifty cases out of a fire last veek . . . they've gone a bit thick now . . . perhaps ve'd better vait until Van Ryn's out of business altogether before we use 'em on the Boers. At present ve've got to get his trade, do you understand? *Get his trade, even if you lose money by it for a time.*"

Mahomet had no opportunity for anything but listening; Sam walked about alone, noting down items. Schlimowitz continued: "My brother-in-law vont here much stay at present; he's got a room fixed at the Masonic. Ven he wants to see the books or write he'll come round the back and go into your office. Now I'm going out into the district to buy stuff; he's going to buy here. You send all the niggers and *bywoners* to him, he'll attend to *that*. You look after the store."

Mahomet smiled contentedly. It was all so simple, even down to his books in Hindustani, which Sam would never be able to read. After a few more remarks

Schlimowitz mounted into the cart and called out, "Come along, Sam!"

The young man followed at last, full of notes. He was not a grocer by trade, but with the genius of his race could so smell money and values that to him the finest china tea or the meanest Boer meal, considered in terms of cash, was as familiar as old furniture or salvaged typewriters.

During that half-hour spent in looking over the stock Sam had arrived at an astonishingly close estimate of its worth; as he now put it to Schlimowitz, "The coolie hasn't an earthly of swinging one over on us."

On the way back they drew up at Van Ryn's, and in the friendliest manner possible, as though nothing had occurred to disturb the harmony of their relations, Schlimowitz went in and introduced his prospective brother-in-law. Johannes was at first disposed to be surly, but Abraham remarked, "Mr. Platsky is going to help me here for a vile . . . he may have a stock to offer you soon."

"What kind of stock?"

"Groceries, hardvare, soft goods . . ."

"You mean . . .?"

"Don't let's talk about it until tings are settled. I've given the coolie two veeks longer to get out . . . that's final."

After this Van Ryn thawed; they all straddled the produce sacks, smoked and spat on the floor, black-guarded Botha and Smuts, and hoped that the Germans would massacre every one in Russia, except the Jews. Sam looked bored by all this talk; "business" was his motto, he had not yet learned the value of this *stoep* and shop joviality. So his thoughts kept reverting to

such things as the price and weight of heifers ; and the quantity of mealies grown to the morgen around Unionstad.

Van Ryn looked interestedly at him. He was wishing that the youth at the other end of the store would reveal a fraction of the young Hebrew's intelligence.

Somebody came in for 15 lbs. of brown sugar. Gerard began weighing it with a grimace, for he had reached the bottom of the sack and the hairs were clinging to his coat. He called the coloured boy and told him to fetch another bag of sugar from the back, meanwhile saying, "There's only 13½ lbs. there—will that do ? "

Van Ryn impatiently cried, "Turn out the sack into the scale ; there's more sugar at the bottom."

For a moment Gerard pondered ; then he went to the back to fetch the other boy for the job. Kafir work was not in his line, he always boasted.

Van Ryn disgustedly said : "That's my manager ! He's got as much brain as a pumpkin . . . always thinking about his Sunday clothes."

"He looks a bit of a *dikkop* " (thickhead), laughed Schlimowitz.

Sam went across and emptied the sack ; when Gerard and the stable-boy returned the customer had the sugar and was waiting to pay.

"That's a smart young chap with you, Schlimowitz."

"I should tink so," he cried, and went into rhapsodies over what Sam could do with books and figures in three languages.

Then suddenly he stopped and said, "Mind you, he's under contract to me for a long time. Besides, a

Yiddisher boy is no good to you . . . he'd vant a partnership in a veek."

And, having warned Van Ryn, he went on again, telling now of a dealer at Bokfontein who had put stones in the bales of wool that he sold to Schlimowitz; whereupon Sam avenged the honour of the firm by selling back two chests of bankrupt tea, each one with a bar of lead in the middle.

At length, Oosthuisen and Achteruit came in, the informal Parliament on the left began to debate, and the Jews went away, promising to call again when Van Ryn was not so busy. Sam walked thoughtfully through the dorp on his way back to the Masonic Hotel; Schlimowitz whipped up the horses and drove off on the road that led to some large farms.

He had devised a plan of campaign which he thought would meet the situation in regard to Van Ryn as well as to Mahomet, both of whom he preferred to placate, if possible, rather than fight.

On his last visit to Cape Town, Schlimowitz had consulted an extra-sharp lawyer, who told him that Van Ryn's scheme to reject building plans for a new store was unsound in practice; there were decisions of the Law Courts which laid down that "when building plans conform to the bye-laws, a Municipality may not refuse to pass them."

Thus Mahomet could legally compel the Unionstad Council to permit the erection of a new store. Aasvogel, his attorney, would be sure to advise this course of action, but in any case these Indians did not leave themselves entirely in the hands of dorp lawyers; they all worked together, contributing to the cost of test cases in their general interest; and when whining

had failed to achieve the desired result they struggled tenaciously, like wounded *duiker* bucks in the veld, passive resisters both.

"Now, Schlimowitz, let me advise you," concluded the attorney. "Come to terms with the coolie, some sort of an amicable arrangement—not that partnership, he could land you in too much trouble!—but get in and work *with* him until you are ready to push him out."

"I've been tinking already like dat. How about the licence transfer question? Can the damned coolie go to the court and force the Municipality . . . ?"

"No, in Cape Colony premises and business are licensed together. If a majority of the Unionstad Council decides not to grant a licence or a new store, the coolie must go."

"Then they could really do as Van Ryn said—refuse to give me a licence for Mahomet's store?"

"It is possible. . . . You could go to the Supreme Court, and perhaps upset them, but you don't want to spend your money in making enemies, do you?"

"God forbid," said Schlimowitz piously. "I'd sooner *vernuik* them peacefully."

The result was this friendly understanding with Mahomet, no legal partnership in the store, but a royalty of 20 per cent. on the net profits for the use of the *erf*. Naturally, Schlimowitz stipulated for a minimum, which was the present rental; Mahomet made up his mind at the same time that there would be little above it to show. He was pleased with the looseness of the whole arrangement, and in his delight at the certainty of swindling the landlord out of the ridiculous 20 per cent., altogether lost sight of

Schlimowitz's aim in coming to so elastic an agreement.

The fact was that the Jew at present took a far keener interest in the buying side of the business than in the selling. He wished all the produce of the district to pass through his hands at lower prices than he now paid, but a monopoly was essential.

This accounted for the brave way in which he had declared to Mahomet: "We've got to get Van Ryn's trade, even if you lose money by it."

He intended to knock the Mayor clean out of the selling business, at the expense of his Indian rival, and then having placed Van Ryn in such a position that he would be ready to give up the store cheaply, and having finished with Mahomet, he would—well, he'd see what he'd do.

As the cart rattled along Schlimowitz surrendered the reins to his Hottentot driver, and lay back dreaming actively of all his plans. He rarely gave himself up to any thoughts but business ones; life to him was either work, both with mind and body, or sleep, to prepare for more work. Often he awoke hours before the dawn, and as he could not lie inactive he would rise, even in the coldest weather, and write down on paper the calculations and figures which obsessed his brain.

Now as he passed along over the dry veld to buy what produce he could, the picture in his mind was not that of an hour hence, nor of the farm beyond the horizon—these things he already took for granted—the Boers out there he had not yet done business with, but they would sell, oh yes, he was sure of that.

Buying was easy when one had the money, and in

these days Schlimowitz never gave a Boer the right to suspect him for one moment, it was with cash always that he purchased. He saw six months ahead, a year, two years . . . himself the biggest buyer and the biggest seller in the district; by then he would be married, his wife an excellent business woman, too; just like Sam, only more pleasant; there would be a child . . . another excellent business woman (or man? he was not sure which, but it mattered little).

Mahomet? "*Ich gebibbel.*" He murmured this Yiddish formula—why should he worry? The coolie would go somewhere else, perhaps forge a permit and get into the Transvaal, or have a fire . . . another bankruptcy, prior to escaping on the deck of a Bombay steamer. Van Ryn would be plodding along again as an Algemeene Agent—instead of an Algemeene Handelaar—suit him better too—these poor Goyen (Christians) were good for nothing but politics, and church, municipalities and school boards . . . very excellent hobbies for Gentiles . . . little Schlimowitz would have to be educated later on, and the Unionstad Public School was quite all right up to the Elementary. He would take all the first prizes worth taking, and Van Ryn (if he were still Mayor) would present them at the Annual Concert, patting little Aaron on his long head and yearning to tweak his long nose.

Thus Schlimowitz dreamed until they ran suddenly into a flock of fat-tailed Afrikander sheep, at which he looked with eyes accurate as a pair of scales, weighing them down to the dripping in the tails, and then calling out to the *schaapwachter*—"Hey, boy, whose sheep are those?" Then he drove on again.

* * * * *

General Botha took Windhoek in the first half of May and spent June preparing to wind up the campaign. Ned wrote home an optimistic letter—they would finish the business early in July, he hoped, and then return to Cape Town, where he meant to rejoin for East Africa or France, if by then the war were not over. He said nothing of returning to Unionstad, and his mother wrote back expressing the hope that " you will not go to Europe without first coming home to see me." She gave him news of the dorp, and said : " Of course the big social event they are talking of here at present is the wedding at Van Ryn's. . . . "

Ned put the letter away from him, dreading to read over the leaf ; then he said, " What a fool I am. How can it matter to me ? I knew she would marry Huysmans." He turned the sheet and continued : " He is rather old to marry, but she has a lot of property, and I hear Van Ryn's daughters get on very well with her."

And suddenly, with a sense of glad relief, Ned realized that he was reading of Van Ryn and Mrs. Viljoen. Why he should feel this way he did not know, any more than a prisoner reprieved from sudden death knows why he is happy at the prospect of a life of misery. After all it was inevitable that Anita would eventually marry Huysmans ; she was yet very young, and then delicacy would prevent any announcement at the time that her father's wedding took place. Still, running through these thoughts was the golden thread of hope, faint and indefinite, it is true, but relief such as that which exists side by side with respite.

Mrs. Oakley's letter continued : " Dear Ned, I wish to tell you that Miss Van Ryn called here a little

while ago and asked me to give you her kindest regards."

His heart gave a great leap; several times he read the precious phrase, though afterwards when he thought over it, his pleasure became modified; and he felt a little ridiculous at attaching so much importance to a perfectly natural act of politeness. But then he thought further on the matter, and again the vague hope was there . . . why had Anita gone to see his mother?

In short, now that there was no immediate talk of Anita's marriage with Huysmans, Ned began to discover a number of urgent reasons for going back to Unionstad; and the shortest campaign on record in the war seemed interminably long. But on the first day of July Otavi was taken, and at the end of the first week the Germans finally gave in at Tsumeb.

Mrs. Viljoen's son telegraphed to his mother, saying that with luck he would be home for her wedding. Ned, who longed far more to return, was less definite, or perhaps his shyness prevented him from telling anyone his secret desire. Like Anita, he was morbidly self-conscious in regard to one matter, and felt that his most sacred thoughts must be as obvious to other people as they were to himself.

CHAPTER XVI

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge."—*Ezekiel* xviii. 2.

IT was inevitable that the anniversary of the European war should produce some ferment, conscious or otherwise, in Unionstad. Not that it was yet a subject for fireworks and bonfires like Guy Fawkes Day; but the Ferreiras and the Du Plessises made up the books of war, as it were, showing Germany with a heavy debit balance; while the Oosthuisens and the Achteruits demonstrated by figures, maps and hopes that England was on her last legs and must soon give in.

O'Flinnigan printed a special summary for the occasion—(Grand War Number he called it)—with colourless headlines that could offend nobody; in the store they began arguing, and to add the final chili to the stew, a bioscope at the Town Hall showed "Pictures from the Battle Front," in which the Germans were undoubtedly having a very bad time. This irritated Oosthuisen greatly; he put on his hat as the pianist struck up "God save the King"; and by doing so led to the famous scene that day in which Thomas Oakley "damned the rebels" and left the Council Chamber.

The blood-stirring qualities of this incident obscured all else for weeks; it became naturally the talk of the dorp and district, everybody expressing violent views one way or the other, except Schlimowitz, Sam Platsky and Mahomet.

O'Flinnigan gave two versions in private, according to which party asked for his opinion ; in the *Unionstad News* he confined himself to a long report of the Council Meeting, with headlines that caused Oakley to squirm and Oosthuisen to say : " O'Flinnigan is laughing at ' God save the King,' " while Ferreira and Du Plessis declared, " He's getting at the Nats."

But in his confidentially alcoholic moments over the bar-counter at the Masonic, O'Flinnigan got talking to Jack de Kock, and first he said : " Ah ! ter Hell wid de Boers " . . . but a minute later added, " and phwen dey go may dey take der damned Union Jack wid dem."

The ex-Guardsman, who in these days limped more than ever, vacantly grinned at the remark. Like many other people in the dorp, he thought O'Flinnigan was a " *snaakse donder* "—queer fish—and " a smart fellow," why, he never stopped to ask ; besides, when an Irishman said a thing like that about the Flag, it was probably humorous and meant to be laughed at ; not as if coming from a Dutchman.

" Why do you say ' to Hell with the Flag,' Mr. O'Flinnigan ? " This question after a long interval of reflection.

" How much are ye gettin' from der British Government for losing yer leg ? "

" I haven't lost my laig."

" Ah well, ye will do, in time. Phwat's yer pension worth ter ye ? Phwat's der flag goin' ter do for ye ? Who cares a damn about ye to-day ? Phwy, man, I wouldn't give ye tree lines in der paaper, retreat from Mons an' all, if ye pegged out to-morrow. Come on, have another F.C. ! "

De Kock lifted down the brandy-bottle, O'Flinnigan took one more whisky with him and went away. Then the barman began to think. It was now nearly a year since he had been wounded, and his leg, instead of getting better, became worse, though his pension remained the same. But this did not distress De Kock so greatly as his utter obliteration; not only had the novelty of his individual exploits worn threadbare, but the retreat from Mons itself was becoming a memory of the past; every day there were new battles, new heroes, new honours . . . "Now the silly blighters are gassing about German West . . . German *West*! My Gord," he muttered, "what's German West to what I went through?"

De Kock was a clear divergence from the Calvinistic Boer type—he loved publicity, parade, glamour. . . . In his early days he had chosen a circus to elope with, because of the talk it would create. Now he was suffering acutely from the pangs of wounded vanity arriving out of that neglect which overtakes all soldiers; and what O'Flinnigan said to him was something he had already said to himself, without admitting that he had even thought it. Yes, the Irishman was right—what was the Flag going to do for him? "Cure my leg, perhaps . . . I don't think!"

Soon all the tin-pot heroes would be coming home from German West; they would be made much of, "Sappers" would bring them into the bar; and he, who had been at Mons, would have to serve them! "My Gord, it's enough to feed a chap up to the back teeth!"

"The girls will be hanging around their necks, there will be dance-parties and concerts, later on Botha will

recommend every man for a K.C.B., or a D.S.O. they will all be decorated ! "

De Kock began to feel some deep and subtle dislike for the " Sappers." In a nebulous way they were in his mind associated with his own miseries ; at least the Nationalists owed him nothing, and if the real Boer *meisjes* scorned his smiles it was on the grounds that he had fought for the British, whereas the " Sapper " girls objected because he had not been an officer. Yes, he remembered that after the Boer War the girls always refused to associate with the regular Tommies . . . damned lots of snobs ! He bitterly regretted not having married one of those fine-looking English girls and brought her out with him—he could have picked up a hundred in the Tubes or tea-rooms, any one of whom would have turned the " Jongs " green with envy. Chewing the cud thus over the miseries of his existence, De Kock found himself seriously asking: " Why not become a Nationalist ? "

He was not very certain as to what change this would bring into his existence, but it meant, at any rate, that when there was another election he would be of some real importance, and not merely an honorary agent as on the last occasion. Yes, he would think about it . . . there might be a good job going too ; one of these days Van Ryn would have to get a new manager, everybody said Gert Achteruit was ruining the business.

* * * * *

After the bioscope incident, and the retirement of Oakley from the Council Chamber, the question of Mahomet's store came prominently into the perspective of all interested in it. Van Ryn knew that a majority in the Town Council could refuse to transfer a licence

to other premises, as well as reject any application for a new one ; but the law expressly forbade a councillor from voting on a question in which he was personally interested, and for this reason the Mayor had no wish to invite a Supreme Court action, and eventual defeat, by giving his casting vote against the coolie. The two parties were so evenly balanced that, as long as Oakley appeared, Van Ryn's vote was essential. Now that the Englishman had withdrawn of his own free will, was the time to bring on the matter.

Van Ryn, from his knowledge of Oakley's character, felt that on no account would the Englishman publicly withdraw his remarks or apologize, so that there was an end to his cudgelling on Mahomet's behalf.

All this was pointed out to Schlimowitz. "Tell him," said Van Ryn, "that he must go, make him apply for his new licence quickly."

The Jew now genuinely tried to move Mahomet, for he saw the way out of his dilemma, during Oakley's absence. But the Indian wailed and sobbed once more ; and ended up daring Schlimowitz to evict him by order of Court. But this was not quite what the Jew wanted, for not only would he lose the licence unless Mahomet agreed to the sale and transfer, but Van Ryn would hear of the secret combination to cut his throat commercially, and this would end for ever all hopes of Schlimowitz's peacefully and cheaply acquiring the bigger store. For just as Van Ryn could condone the suppression of the rebellion but not the khaki in which it was suppressed, so he would condone the Jew's sharp practices but never the association with a coolie.

And thus once more Mahomet's sentence was sus-

pended, like the coffin of his ancestral prophet; for none of the protagonists would abandon his *slim* methods, or passive resistance, for definite, direct action.

In this way August slipped by and already the buds were beginning to pout on the peach trees; quince hedges showed a brighter green through the dark, symmetrical masses of juicy wood; pears, pomegranates and apricots were preparing to take the place of the oranges and guavas, in a little while the loquats would hang yellow upon the boughs. And any day now people said "the boys will be home from German West." A dozen or more had gone from Unionstad, "Sappers," of course, by connection, every one, except Ned Oakley and Mrs. Viljoen's son.

Ever since the campaign in German West had so summarily ended, Van Ryn, without letting the widow suspect his motives, had urged an earlier date for the ceremony. He dreaded seeing there the "khaki son," a figure that might lead to dissatisfaction on the part of the Nationalists, and perhaps even to open unpleasantness. But the sale of the stock had been announced for the first week of September, and the wedding for the middle of the month; Mrs. Viljoen, for some strange woman's reason, wanted the consent and blessing which her son's presence at the ceremony would imply, and she also regarded any undue haste in marriage as an infraction of a good woman's proper modesty. "No, no, Johannes," she said, "you may hold the sale sooner, as you think the prices will then be better" (that was his reason given in the capacity of auctioneer), "but don't ask me to be wedded before the spring."

" Why not, Fredericka . . . it seems so long to wait," and he sighed, as though longing for the fleshpots of fifty, his sigh plainly saying, " We are getting older every day."

" Johannes . . . we shall by then have been engaged just six months. Hendrik's father and I were engaged three years before we married . . . surely six months is not long to wait ? You should have asked me earlier if you wanted to marry so soon."

And on this point the widow displayed surprising firmness of will for one who had so meekly resigned herself to the dictates of her first husband.

September came at last ; and the impatient bridegroom watched the days going slowly by. Within a fortnight of the wedding there were distinct prospects that the son would not be back from the war in time, and Mrs. Viljoen's anxieties upon this were shared by Van Ryn, but pleasurably. And then, a few days before the ceremony, there dropped off the mail train a young soldier, brown as his khaki uniform, who rode into Unionstad beside the scornful De Kock on the 'bus of the Masonic Hotel. After lunch he looked in at the Algemeene Handelaar's, where Gerard, sleepily and surlily, but in his best English said, " Mr. Van Ryn will be at home, laying down as usual after lunch."

Hendrik Viljoen, who was a spruce young fellow possessing much of his mother's good looks, at once went to the house, for although reluctant to disturb the sanctity of the after lunch siesta, even during the coolness of spring, he was in a hurry to set out to the farm which was 20 miles distant, and he considered it his duty to see his prospective step-father before doing so.

Sara, the maid, showed him into the *voorkamer*, where he found Maggie just about to have tea. "*Pa* will be out in a few minutes," she said. . . . "Oh, you are Hendrik Viljoen? I didn't recognize you in your khaki uniform. When did you arrive then? Nobody expected you . . . Oh—Oh, to give your mother a surprise, hey? Shall I call *pa* and tell him you're here?"

"Don't trouble," he said, finding her society very agreeable. "A few minutes more or less won't make much difference. . . . I'll be at the farm before seven anyhow."

"Have a cup of tea, or shall I get you some coffee?"

"If it's all the same to you, in the afternoon I prefer tea."

"Yes," said Maggie, "isn't it funny—I've got used to having tea in the afternoon too." She told the girl to bring another cup of tea, and while waiting for it asked: "Did you meet Oakley's son at the front?"

"Only once. We were not with the same column."

Maggie then began chaffing her prospective step-brother on his exploits, his uniform, etc., which he took in very good part, showing none of the morbid sensitiveness to ridicule or criticism which is so Calvinistic and colonial.

Her father came into the room as the shafts of wit and laughter were flying thickest; for a moment he stood amazed at the familiarity of his daughter with a strange khaki; then the boy turned, and Van Ryn, with drooping spirits, realized that he was face to face with the unwelcome wedding guest.

They shook hands more or less amiably; it was now close on a year that Hendrik had gone off to fight

against the rebels in the Free State ; as he had not been in Unionstad since, people could, if they wished, quite feasibly forget that part of his record. But the young man felt, through Van Ryn's manner, that his action was not forgotten, and he thought this rather an exaggerated sentiment, for the deep-rooted Anglophobia of the elder Boers was incomprehensible to many of their children, who, like Hendrik Viljoen, had put on khaki more in the spirit of adventure than of any overflowing loyalty to the British Flag. Mrs. Viljoen's son wanted badly to taste the excitement of war as his father before him had done ; and by joining the Government commandoes his enterprise was legalized and facilitated. He could not now understand why the Nationalists took so sombre and serious a view of his action ; just as Ned Oakley never could follow the ramifications of his own father's anti-Boer mind, filled as it was with dead things of the past ; living on memories like Majuba. Not that Hendrik Viljoen was as thoughtful or analytic as Ned ; his trouble rather was that he would not think. He lived like a healthy young horse, full of animal spirits, eager to arch his back and prance, in short, to live without thinking of the irrefutable past.

Maggie had gone outside to look for Anita. Van Ryn first talked to Hendrik about commonplace things, then he said :

" Well, Hendrik, I hope you are finished now with all this *nuikerij* ! When are you going to take off that khaki ? "

" Ah, I don't know . . . I'm only on furlough."

" Furlough ! . . . I thought by your spurs, you were on a horse. . . . Oh, you mean on leave . . . well,

you don't have to wear that here in Unionstad. There is no war here."

Hendrik was explaining the intricacies of uniform and mufti when the girls came in. Van Ryn soon returned to the subject of khaki, for he wished Hendrik clearly to understand that to appear in it at his mother's wedding would be impossible. . . . Hendrik did not seem to understand; he spoke as though his uniform and his life were indivisible.

"Well," at last said Van Ryn bluntly and sternly, "I am sorry you have come back to Unionstad in those things, Hendrik . . . there was no need to remind our people that you took up arms against them."

"But, Oom Johannes"—(he had always called Van Ryn "Uncle Johannes")—"*ma* begged me to come home for the wedding, and I have to dress in uniform."

"Couldn't you leave the British Army altogether?"

"Not immediately. . . . I signed on for the duration of the war."

"Oh well, perhaps that isn't far off now. . . . They can't hold out much longer."

"Yes, the Germans are beaten, hey, Oom?" agreed Hendrik innocently.

"Germans! Germans! I said nothing about the Germans . . . the English are finished." Van Ryn was now in a violent temper, and he attacked Hendrik bitterly for having fought against his people. "Do you forget, wretched boy, that your father and I fought shoulder to shoulder against the English?"

Anita, seeing the storm descend, went to her father and placed her hand gently upon his shoulder, but Van Ryn took no notice of her, and purged himself of his bitter feelings in the phrase: "Your little sister

died in the concentration camp, murdered by the neglect of the English . . . you escape, and as soon as you grow up you show your gratitude to the Khakis by putting on their clothes and going away to fight for them against your own people."

Hendrik, carried away by the violence of the attack, bowed his head: "My sister died in a concentration camp, I know . . . perhaps the food and the doctors were bad, perhaps they neglected her there, though *ma* says she was always weak and sickly. But, suppose what you say is true—can I help it that I feel no hatred for the English? I have tried sometimes to feel that way, but I can't. . . . Is it my fault that I am so made?"

"Yes," cried Van Ryn, "it is your fault. You are ungrateful and unnatural to be *Engels gesind*. Have my children got khaki ideas? Look at Anita there . . . ask her if *she* would wear khaki, ask her if *she* would marry a man who wore khaki?"

Suddenly Anita reddened. "Father," she said, "it is useless to reason in that way. Children have the right to their own existence and their own ideas. It is selfish, I know, but all nature is selfish. We do not bleed when you are cut, our hunger does not vanish when you eat . . . "

"What, Anita, such words from you!"

"I tell you what I feel, father."

"You give Hendrik right then for having fought against his own people?"

"No, I do not. But I understand him when he says he finds it impossible to hate this generation of English for what their parents did to your generation."

"Anita, remember what the Predikant says out of

the Bible—'the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge!"

"Yes, I know—that is from Ezekiel and Jeremiah. But the prophets did not mean it as the Predikant says—they did not tell us to keep our teeth on edge. Why should we?"

"Why? Because the English for over a century have misruled South Africa and made the Boers eat sour grapes, and that is why the children's teeth are set on edge. If they want peace here, let them give us back our land."

Anita saw that it was useless to continue the discussion. "How are you going out to the farm, Hendrik?"

"I can get a horse from the hotel."

"What do you want a horse from the hotel for?" asked Van Ryn. "Can't you use one of mine?"

"I didn't like to ask . . ."

"*Boch!* Only don't ride him with those military spurs . . . he'd know you were a khaki and throw you off."

This was uttered in a grimly jocular way, so Hendrik smiled. Van Ryn went round to the stables.

"*Machtig*," said Hendrik, with a movement of relief, "the old chap wasn't half wild, hey?"

"Served you right," remarked Maggie.

"You haven't got much use for my uniform either, Maggie?"

"No, I haven't," she said, but deciding at the same time that Hendrik in his uniform was preferable to Klaas in his Sunday serge.

After the young man had pocketed his spurs (the upright horse really objected to them), he rode off

gallantly down the main road, Maggie waving her hand to him from the stoep. Before Hendrik could be discussed, Sara returned from clearing the post-box, bearing a handful of letters. Anita began opening these; they were chiefly replies to wedding invitations that she had sent out during the past week. Over one envelope she hesitated some time before breaking the seal—it was addressed in the characteristic hand-writing of Huysmans. Maggie and her father sat by, interestedly hearing the name of each prospective guest; after a long pause Anita opened the letter from Cape Town and said: "Father, you will be glad to hear that Jan Huysmans is coming."

"Really, Anita? I am very pleased. Fancy him coming all the way from Cape Town for my wedding . . . It is very good of him." Then mischievously he added: "If it were for his own wedding I could understand it better."

Neither of the girls said anything in reply. Anita seemed thoughtful and indisposed to talk; Maggie watched her closely, with a knowing air that was full of discretion.

Two days later Huysmans arrived. He did not let anybody know by which train he was coming, and quietly went to the Masonic Hotel. When Van Ryn heard of it a few minutes later he rushed across, and half in anger, half with regret, begged of Huysmans to leave there and come with him as before.

"Nay, nay, Johannes . . . your house will be busy enough during the next two days. . . ."

But Van Ryn could see that Huysmans would not intrude because his presence in the house, he feared, might embarrass Anita.

Huysmans had grown sadder and older looking in those six months; "strange," thought Van Ryn, "what a fuss some people make of their domestic affairs . . . all this waste of time, and the pulling of sad faces; why not get it over and be done with it?"

"Jan," he said, "I hope that before another six months have passed, you too will be a happy husband. . . . There is nothing like married life for a man—a wife and children . . ."

He was going on to expound this genial philosophy, when he caught a glimpse of Huysmans' drawn face, exquisitely sensitive in its sufferings. "Come over, Jan, and have dinner with us." He referred to the midday meal. "Anita expects you."

They crossed the road together and saw Anita standing upon the *stoep* as if in expectation of their coming. Van Ryn opened the garden gate, and she came down the steps to meet Huysmans, who noted the sadness in her face, as she discerned that in his. Anita went to him with a sweet but wistful smile, putting out her hand, which he took in silence and held for some time, as though it were a human transmitter sending out the inward message of her heart.

Van Ryn walked boisterously indoors, with an air that plainly said, "You have much to say to each other."

But it was in silence that Anita and Huysmans a few moments later followed him into the house.

* * * * *

That night after supper Huysmans went back to Van Ryn's, and once again he and Anita sat beneath the vines in the cool night air. In the *voorkamer* Maggie was entertaining several visitors, among whom were

Klaas Kachelhopper and Hendrik Viljoen. Gerard was in the office with Van Ryn, unfolding a tale of woe . . . bad business all day, a case of paraffin-oil broken into three sacks of sugar, and a five-pound note in the cash which the bank that afternoon had refused to accept. Van Ryn received the various items of intelligence with the philosophy of a man about to be married for the second time ; but when finally Gert announced : "They say Schlimowitz has bought the coolie store to-day," he sprang from his seat and roared, "*Verdom* ! who told you that ? "

"Aasvogel's clerk told me—they drew up the documents there."

"I suppose you think that's a fine wedding present to give me, hey, Gert ? Is that why you came to tell me ? "

"No, Mr. Van Ryn," replied Gerard in a way that was almost accusing. "I came to tell you because I want also to ask you for a rise."

"A rise—what do you mean ? "

"Well . . . the hours are long and the profits I was supposed to get are nothing at all. And now I hear in the dorp that you are going to sell the store."

"Sell the store ! Who the devil says that ? "

"Everybody."

"Perhaps they'll tell me too the price and the man I am selling to ? "

"Well, the price I can't say, but the man who is buying is Schlimowitz."

"What ! . . . "

"And as I may have to go any day, I'll rather look for something else now unless you give me more money."

Van Ryn sat staring at the bank-book that lay open before him; he was apparently oblivious of any word spoken since the Jew's name. It was as though a searchlight had suddenly been flashed into his brain; all the innate suspiciousness of the Boer came to the surface . . . in a few days' time perhaps he would contemplate Schlimowitz more peacefully, but for the moment his heart was filled with deep and bitter resentment against this Jew who, by outflanking his prejudices instead of squarely facing them, had so signally outwitted him.

* * * * *

" . . . And did you really want me near you, Anita ? "

" If I had not wanted you to come, Jan, would I have written that letter ? "

" How can I say ? " he answered. " In life we find it hard enough to read the faces of men . . . who knows what is in the heart of a woman ? "

She stared out across the garden, looking gravely at the railway track where a moving light showed the down train approaching the station. He watched her closely and saw the sadness imperceptibly deepen in the lines of her face. What was she thinking of ? He was recalling the afternoon six months ago and his thoughts then, " When she is a year older I shall be five years more "—no, it was not so—in half a year she had acquired the sad maturity of a woman whose life held disappointment and unhappiness; and to-day was more fitted to be the wife of a man so much older than herself, as he was.

" You never wrote again so sweetly asking me to

return," he said. "I promised to come only if you did."

"But I wrote again, Jan. I wrote several times."

"Yes, Anita, but you never repeated the tone of that letter."

He drew it from his inner pocket and almost unconsciously began to read. "Don't, don't," she said.

"You are ashamed of it!" For once his voice showed resentment.

"No, no, Jan . . . I shall never be ashamed of it." She was on the point of adding, "It is something I shall always be proud of."

"Perhaps, Anita, it is only that you regret having sent it?"

"Oh, *mij vriend*, why make yourself unhappy like that? Why did you not accept it as I sent it and come? Why persist in doubting my words?"

He did not reply, and Anita saw her father's shadow as he came out of the office.

"You came at once in reply to the invitation card for father's wedding . . . perhaps you expected me to send you . . . ?"

Suddenly she stopped and her father came across towards them. "Anita," he said, "you were right. That accursed Schlimowitz has *vernuiked* me. He took advantage of my marriage, my private affairs, to get the coolie store transferred to him. And now he thinks he can take my store from me too!"

CHAPTER XVII

"En waar is 'n man die 'n mooie vrouw
Zoo goed als 'n Boer kan onderhou ?
Zoo 'n Boer is tog 'n gave ding,
Voornaam als hij 'n Engelsman ben."
A Dutch National Anthem—Anonymous.

AT daybreak Mrs. Viljoen left her farm and came into Unionstad. She was being married from the Oosthuisens' house, as her most intimate friend in the dorp, Mrs. Ferreira, was unfortunately the wife of the notorious loyalist who so irritated Councillor Oosthuisen in the Town Hall. Despite her husband, Mrs. Ferreira was quite willing to allow Fredericka to be married from her home ; but Van Ryn objected on political grounds. The arrangements in consequence were that, after the church ceremony, everything would take place at the Mayor's house, where special servants had been brought from the farm to help in the distribution of refreshments on that lavish scale usual among the South African Dutch. Of course all the Nationalist ladies of the dorp had been helping Anita and Maggie for days past to prepare jellies, cakes, custards, *komfyt*, lemon syrup, tarts, etc., poultry were plucked by the maids, the stable-boy dispatched a sucking-pig, and Hendrik on the night before the wedding arrived from the farm with a whole sheep.

Naturally the store was closed for the day ; apart from anything else Van Ryn welcomed the respite, for obsessed as he had been by thoughts of his marriage, he was unable to plan any escape from the *kraal* into which Schlimowitz had driven him. All he could realize for the moment was that the Jew had got the

better of him, and that the business which the Oakleys had been forced to abandon because of politics, he, too, despite his majority in the Town Council, would have to surrender to an illiterate Russian Jew, whose supreme virtue lay in his alienation from all things South African. Why not cancel the sale of Mrs. Viljoen's farm, before it was too late, and stay there after the honeymoon ? Why go on losing money in business ? His bride was giving up everything to come and live with him as the Mayoress of Unionstad, but was she not happier out there on the veld, away from all the hatred, malice and dishonesty of the dorp ?

He was musing thus when Huysmans, dressed for the functions of best-man in his parliamentary frock-coat, entered the room.

" Good morning, Johannes ! How do you feel . . . nervous ? "

" Not a bit . . . less so, *kerel*, on the day of my wedding than you are six months before yours."

" Ah, but you have had previous practice," said the best-man, making a brave effort to be gay.

" Jan . . . have you spoken to Anita yet ? "

Huysmans shook his head and seemed desirous of avoiding the subject.

" Why not ? " persisted Van Ryn.

" Oh, I don't know."

" After I have been to the *kerk* and shown you how easy it is," chaffed the widower, " perhaps you will not be afraid any longer."

" Perhaps not." But Huysmans' smile was just a little sad.

" *Ach, kerel*, come on then," cried Van Ryn. " If you don't speak to Anita to-day, I shall do so for you.

Yes, I mean it. Now promise me . . . or I shall believe you don't think my girl is good enough for you."

"Very well, old *vriend*, I promise."

The wedding ceremony was fixed for noon, and already the house was in a turmoil, Maggie's merry laugh mingling with the chatter of Mrs. Achteruit, Mrs. Kachelhopper, the doctor's wife, and other ladies. Hendrik was not there yet, he being at the Oosthuisens, where Mrs. Ferreira opened the wedding day with a severe lecture on the evils of Khaki, which wound up as follows:—"Yesterday I saw two black boys from the location in uniform just like yours. They were going off to fight against white men, and in England and France they will mix with white women just as the Zulus did when they went over there with the circus. And when they come back to Unionstad they will think they are as good as white men; perhaps they will want to shake hands with you, Hendrik—you are all allies and all Botha's boys, fighting for the Empire! But if I meet any of the black *skepsels*, I will sjambok them off the footpath."

These continuous jeers, and the pleading of his mother, at last induced Hendrik to risk civilian clothing, and when the bridegroom thus saw his stepson at the church his face brightened as though a gift inconceivably precious had suddenly arrived, something that eclipsed the whole array of wedding-presents gathered in the *voorkamer* at home. But Maggie seemed dissatisfied, for she said to Anita: "Hendrik doesn't look half so nice in ordinary clothes."

While the Predikant was majestically directing the ceremony in church, with the organ pealing, and white

muslin rustling, the mail train arrived from Cape Town, sharp to time, for once. A couple of commercial travellers, and the advance agent for Horace Hashem's company were the only arrivals, in addition to Ned Oakley. De Kock, when he saw who the smart young colonial soldier was, lost his air of contempt, left the " commercials " to look after themselves, and shouted :

" Hullo, Oakley—*hoe gaat het ?* "

" Fine, thanks," replied Ned in the Taal. " How's your leg getting on ? "

" Rotten. Come up in the 'bus with me, hey ? The boy can drive to your house . . . don't bother about a cab. Got any more luggage in the van ? No . . . hey, Stompnose, take the *baas's* bag."

Ned shook hands with the station-master, and got into the 'bus, which rattled worse than ever, as if in harmony with the deterioration of De Kock's leg. The advance agent had gone to the Commercial Hotel, which was a shilling per day less than the Masonic, while the " commercials " had taken a cab, so that Ned and De Kock had the 'bus to themselves.

" Are you on furlough, Oakley ? "

" I've got leave, yes."

" When do you go back ? "

" In a week."

" Where to, German West again ? "

" No . . . I'm thinking of joining up for Europe."

" Don't be a damn fool, man."

" What ? " Ned looked with surprise at De Kock.

" I tell you," said the ex-Guardsman vehemently, " don't be a damn fool. What do you want to go to Europe for ? You've done your bit, now get out of it, while you're still all right."

Ned was so amazed by the change in De Kock's attitude, as well as by his altered appearance, that he found scarcely a word to say, and listened to the big fellow's voice growing shriller with excitement, and more impassioned, until it rose above the din of the dingy 'bus. "You ask me why *I* went? Because I was a damned fool! What will they do for you if you're wounded? What do they do for me? . . . I get 1*s.* 8*d.* per day pension. *Ach*, don't talk to me about defending your country! Europe is not your country, they tell you a lot of damned lies, just like a fellow tells a girl sometimes; and afterwards, when they have done with you and your body is bruised and maimed, they'll still treat you like a girl, they'll laugh at you and say 'what a fool you were to listen to me!'"

"What the devil are you talking like this for?" said Ned at length. "The last time I saw you . . ."

"Never mind the last time, Oakley. That was only six months after the Retreat from Mons. Now it is a year. That's the difference."

They were passing the church, and pointing to the number of well-dressed people at the door Ned diverted the conversation. "What's on there?"

"Don't you know . . . ?—Van Ryn's wedding."

"Oh, of course."

And when De Kock tried to resume the broken thread he found Ned occupied with his own thoughts, and quite oblivious of what was being pumped into his ears. So the "runner"—showman to the last and determined to be interesting even at the cost of his convictions—talked about Huysmans' coming there to act as best-man, and of his staying at the Masonic. . . .

"He's staying at your place? Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure—do you think I don't know what I'm doing?"

De Kock's behaviour and the unexpected news had for a moment made Ned think that the barman was intoxicated, for the marks of alcohol about him were obvious, whereas in the past De Kock had been a most abstemious fellow. To prove his clear-headedness and sanity he now became more informative than ever, giving Ned all the news of the dorp—Schlimowitz's purchase of the coolie store; Gert Achteruit's hopeless failure with Van Ryn; O'Flinnigan's private opinion of the English, and finally the Town Council sensation, of which Thomas Oakley was the hero. Of the last incident, however, Ned had heard, for not only had O'Flinnigan wired it to the Press of the outer world, but Mrs. Oakley had sent her son a copy of the local paper containing an account of the disorderly scene. From this report (especially by the way that O'Flinnigan "headlined" Councillor Oakley) Ned gathered that his father was almost entirely to blame for what happened; and this added another excuse for early leave and a return to Unionstad.

The 'bus having contemptuously passed its own hotel, now drew up before Oakley's home, and soon Ned was fighting to restrain the madly joyous leaps of his dogs, in order to reach his mother and give her the affectionate embrace that she awaited. Oakley came hurrying in from the back—"By Jove, doesn't he look well, mother!" Then he shook hands proudly with his son and said: "It didn't take you boys long to smash up those brutes, eh! . . . And it won't take very long in France either, once they get going." Ned was

too happy to contradict his father's optimism, and he good-naturedly answered questions about the campaign, over which it appeared that Mrs. Oakley had entertained much anxiety.

"Bah," said the father, "I never thought they'd put up a fight at all, and I'm not going to say *I* ever looked for Ned's name in the casualty list." Then to the boy: "I suppose you know what's going on in the dorp at present?"

"You mean the wedding?"

"Yes; by Jove, if the devil were to cast his net round the *kerk* now, he'd catch a few rebels, hey?"

"I think he'd catch worthier fish at Mahomet's store, wouldn't he?"

"You've heard about that already, Ned? What do you think of it?"

"I'm not surprised."

"Well, I can't say I'm sorry," exclaimed Oakley. "The Indian was a bit too smart for slim Mr. Van Ryn, who had the damn cheek to tell me that we had swindled him over the store."

"What! When did he say that?"

"Oh, Tom, why go into it all over again? Surely it's dead and forgotten by now."

"No, no, mother; I'd like to hear that. I never thought Van Ryn would believe such a thing of either Dad or me."

"Yes, let Ned hear the story," said Oakley, and he proceeded to tell of the scene in the store, coloured unconsciously by his prejudices and distorted through the medium of his temperament.

Mrs. Oakley saw by her son's face that his anger was rising, and that he was being worked up to a point

where he would be capable of going straight to Van Ryn, wedding-day or no wedding-day, and of "having it out." She therefore said: "I suppose Mr. Van Ryn was in a bad temper and said more than he meant to do, just as your father did when he hurt Miss Van Ryn's feelings."

"What's that, mother?" Ned turned sharply with the question and waited for a reply.

"Oh, we mustn't exaggerate," continued Mrs. Oakley; "it was just a chance remark that Dad made the day she came here."

"You told me nothing of it in your letter."

"No, Ned; I didn't want you to know that the old squabbles were going on still."

"The little spitfire came here," interrupted Oakley, "talking like a rebel, and I wouldn't stand it, that's all."

"There's surely no need to drag women into these race differences, Dad. What did you say to Miss Van Ryn that hurt her feelings?" Oakley did not reply. "What did Dad say?"

"It isn't worth talking about, Ned," and Oakley left the room in a huff.

"What did he say? . . . If you don't tell me, mother, I'll go to Miss Van Ryn and ask her."

"Does it matter so very much, Ned?"

He gravely nodded his head, and Mrs. Oakley gently told him of the foolish quarrel and of her husband's final jeer. "I'm very sorry, Ned. . . . If I'd known you cared, I wouldn't have let her and your father meet so soon after his affair with Van Ryn."

Ned for some moments sat thinking deeply; then he looked at the watch on his wrist. Mrs. Oakley

put her hands on his shoulders and said: "Never mind, Ned, perhaps it is all for the best," while the older of the dogs licked his master's ear. "Come and have something to eat, my boy . . . we were just going to sit down."

The meal passed in silence, and immediately it was over Ned rose and left the house.

On his way through the dorp, where every moment he was greeted and welcomed by some friend, he encountered Schlimowitz, who seemed utterly taken aback at his presence. "Hullo, Oakley," he cried with effusion, "vat brings you back?"

"Business."

Disturbed by the hostile tone, Schlimowitz became more friendly than ever. "I suppose you know I've bought Mahomet out? The poor coolie couldn't get an *erf* to start again, and I didn't vant to let him starve mit his family, so I bought the lot. I'll make a fine big store of it . . . and perhaps after the Var I'll put up the flag for your pa." He smiled humorously.

"What flag?"

"Haven't you heard? Mahomet got your pa to promise support in the Council, and he signed a paper to fly the Union Jack over the store."

"No fear of *your* flying that now, hey, Schlimowitz?"

"Oy, yoy, yoy! Do you want my store to be burned down by accident? But you can tell your pa I'll hang out perhaps the Yiddisher flag . . . the vun mit three balls on it."

In spite of himself Ned smiled, upon seeing which the Jew leaned forward and murmured: "How vould you like to manage that store for me? . . . £25 a

month . . . and 10 per cent. of the profits . . . if ve go bankrupt."

At which jest he himself was shaking with laughter, when he heard Ned say : " But who's going to manage the other store for you ? "

" Vich other store ? "

" Van Ryn's," retorted the Gentile, and he walked away, higher now in the Jew's esteem than £25 a month.

Ned had no single definite idea in mind as he entered the gate of Van Ryn's house and walked to the front door. He vaguely knew that he wanted to explain to Anita the words of his father, and to ask Van Ryn what he meant by his insinuation regarding the sale of the store. But above these things he wanted to see Anita ; he was possessed by an indefinable longing to look at her, a longing that amounted nearly to physical suffering, like hunger or thirst. He felt that there was nothing in life he really wanted but her ; as he entered the grounds, with beating heart, he realized that without Anita existence would be utterly desolate and lonely. Pink blossoms and white quilted the garden ; from inside came the sounds of careless laughter, the clinking of glasses, words spoken as in formal speech, wedding indications everywhere. What was he doing there ? Ned asked himself. He could only bring discord into that happy atmosphere . . . it was selfish of him to come—what right had he to spoil Van Ryn's pleasure on such a day as this, because of a quarrel that had occurred months ago ? He turned round, after standing irresolute before the front door for some moments, and was about to steal quietly out of the garden, when the loud popping of a cork and an explosion of laughter was followed by a general protest, a scuffle and the

sound of running steps on the side *stoep*; then Maggie rounded the corner and saw Ned at the moment he saw her.

Perhaps Maggie's surprise prevented her from speaking, perhaps it was the feminine instinct, so strong despite the sense of fun. She uttered a little cry, but immediately suppressed the sound and went towards Ned, whispering: "Where do you come from?" Then she continued: "Achteruit was making a speech and I shot him with a bottle of champagne. Come in, hey, and drink *gesondheid* (good health)—it's father's wedding."

"I know," he said. "But if you don't mind I'd rather not go in there."

"Well, come in pa's office." She led him into it by the *stoep* door and said: "Do you want to see . . . ?"

"Your father, please. But don't bother. I'll come back to-morrow; I didn't know they would still be at dinner."

"Pa won't be here to-morrow—he's going away for the honeymoon." She smiled excruciatingly. "You'd better see him now—he's finished dinner already."

She hurried out and Ned sat down with more confidence since it was Van Ryn he awaited. But suddenly the inner door opened and Anita came in. She started back as surprised as he was. . . . "I didn't know it was you. . . . Maggie said . . ."

"I suppose she thought you would spoil the joke by not coming in if she told you that it was I."

"Why do you say that?" She went to him frankly and spontaneously, holding out her hand; and her touch thrilled him as nothing had ever done before. He looked longingly at her, and for the first time saw

how much more womanly she had grown in that half year. And yet her eyes were not sad, for since entering the room they had brightened once more with the joy of life, as though the sparkle of rich wine had passed through her veins into them.

"I'm so glad to see you. You came for my father's wedding?"

"No," he said. "I came to tell you that I regret my father's unkindness; I want you to accept my sincere apology. . . ."

"Don't," she said.

"He meant nothing by it," continued Ned. "It was only his stupid anger, my mother has assured me of this."

"You are certain your father meant nothing by that remark."

"How could he, Anita?" exclaimed Ned; and the sincere, manly accents of his voice as he called her by that name for the first time removed the very memory of pain and sorrow from her heart, and she went to him as though it were the obvious and natural thing to do, folding herself into his strong young arms and yielding to the passionate but reverent caresses of his lips.

* * * * *

A few minutes later Maggie darted in with a bottle of champagne and two glasses. "There comes pa . . . I told him you wanted to see him. Here, drink his health."

As Ned and Anita looked at each other, drinking, in spirit, to their own happiness, Van Ryn entered the office. "*Dag*, Oakley," he said cordially. "I am glad to see you here to-day, because it is no time to

remember the past, so let us shake hands and be friends again." They shook hands, the girls went out, and Ned raised his glass. "I wish you all happiness in your married life, Mr. Van Ryn. As you say, this is no day for quarrelling, so I won't talk about what I came for."

"Your pa told you about that? . . . Well, I was very angry over your going away and your father made me worse. You know, Oakley," he said confidentially, "when your pa once starts on politics it's impossible to argue with him. He's really *gefaarlijk* (dangerous). But I didn't mean anything nasty—you know *slimheid* is not *vernuikerij*; a man shouldn't take it up so sharp as all that."

Ned understood perfectly; he could in his mind's eye see the scene in the store, with the two bigoted men flinging racial retorts at each other.

"Oakley, where are your father and mother . . . won't they perhaps come round and drink our health?"

"I don't know why they shouldn't, Mr. Van Ryn. Shall I go and see if I can get them to come?"

"No, why go away? Look here, Mrs. Viljoen's cart—*ach*, I forget, I mean my wife's cart, of course—is *inspanned* outside; I'll send it for them." Then he called out "Anita."

"They may not come," said Ned dubiously; "I'd better go; you know how stubborn my father is."

Anita came in and Van Ryn said: "Give me one of those invitation cards . . . or perhaps you sent one already to Mr. and Mrs. Oakley?"

"I didn't send them one, father." She had not spoken to him of what happened between her and Thomas Oakley, and left the impression that her father's

differences with the Englishman were a sufficiently good reason. As Anita got the card, Ned scribbled a note to accompany it.

"DEAR MOTHER AND DAD,—

"I want you please to come at once by this cart to the Van Ryns. It is very important, so please do not let old differences stand in your way.

"NED.

"P.S.—Mr. Van R. has apologized for saying Dad was slim.

"P.P.S.—To Mother: Don't let Dad discuss politics or the war."

When the invitation had been dispatched, Van Ryn insisted upon Ned's going with him into the *voor-kamer*, where most of the guests had retired after dinner. Nobody but the family was aware that the Englishman was there; and his entrance, dressed in khaki, created a profound sensation.

"*Vriende*," said Van Ryn, "here is Oakley, back from the silly war, to wish me and Fredericka success."

Cries of "hoor, hoor."

"This is not a day to tell him how foolish he was to go and risk his life to please Louis Botha and King George, so I won't say anything about that, and I hope you won't either, because this is not the Town Council, and we don't want to talk any politics here . . . to-day anyhow."

Anita at this point wisely filled Ned's glass and looked at him with a look that plainly said—"Say something before he starts on the war." Her face was filled with happy tolerance; Huysmans, who had quietly just

come in, stood upon the threshold looking at her strangely.

"*Vriende,*" began Ned in the Taal, amid cries of approval from all round: "As the solitary person in this room who represents by birth both the Dutch and the English races, let me say a few words, very few, about our host the bridegroom."

As he paused there were whisperings. "How well he speaks the Taal, *neh*?"

"I have known Mr. Van Ryn for many years. I was in his employ for twelve months. Before I went to work for him I was told—'You'll never get on with a Boer in business.'"

"Who said that?" asked Van Ryn. "Your pa?"

Ned avoided the thin ice by going round it. "Well, no man could have had a better *baas* than I had, we were really friends in business, and I had many opportunities of seeing Mr. Van Ryn's kindness. . . ."

Here the bridegroom protested. "*Ach,* Oakley, leave that alone, hey."

"I won't embarrass him by the truth any more, but ask you all to drink his health and that of Mrs. Van Ryn, one of the most charming ladies in South Africa."

The guests cheerfully applauded Ned's modest effort, and then raised their glasses, crying "*gesondheid*" and "*geluk.*" Huysmans had been watching Anita's face during the unpretentious little speech, and he read in it pride and happiness such as he had not seen there for many months. All his undefined premonitions suddenly became real and definite knowledge; he knew that his most finished oratory could not bring that look to her face. For a moment his courage almost

failed him at the realization ; then bravely and manfully he stepped into the middle of the room and shaking Ned by the hand said :

" Congratulations on a capital little speech, Oakley, and welcome back to Unionstad."

A moment later Anita walked sadly away, leaving the two men together.

Maggie came in soon after and whispered:

" Ned, your father and mother are there."

He found them in the office, where Anita had conducted them, with kindly words of welcome that made Thomas Oakley for the first time regret the brutal phrase he had used to her when she came to his house.

" What's the matter, Ned ? I thought there was a row on with the Nationalists."

" I was hoping that would bring you along in a hurry, Dad."

" What is it, Ned ? " asked his mother with that woman's instinct of love, keener by far than her husband's hate. " Is it she ? "

" Yes," he answered.

" What's up, Ned . . . what's all this secrecy between your mother and you ? "

" Not secrecy, Dad, but sympathy. I'm going to ask Mr. Van Ryn to give Anita to me, and I wanted you and mother not to stand in my way."

Mrs. Oakley kissed her son, but the father remained half-dazed, and Ned went on : " Not that I'm going to let anything stand in my way, Dad. I warn you, so you might as well agree now as later on."

" I don't deny she's a good-looking girl, Ned, but a red-hot rebel. . . . By Jove," he continued weakly,

" she'd better not come talking Dutch republics in my house."

" And you can bet you're not going to talk politics of any kind in my house," said the son, grimly humorous, as he shook his father's hand.

Ned then went out to call Anita, and Oakley took the opportunity to say : " Well, I'm damned, mother ! What do you think of it ? "

" She's a fine girl, Tom."

" I suppose we've got to put up with it," he growled.

Anita came in and went straight to Mrs. Oakley, whom she kissed with a sweet affection that won even Oakley's heart. He held out his hand saying, " Will you kiss me too, and forget that I'm an Englishman ? "

And all reserve vanished in the laugh that followed.

" Now," said Ned grimly, " we must break the news to father."

" What do you mean ? " asked Thomas Oakley, as Anita went to fetch Van Ryn. " You surely don't think . . . ? "

" Well, one never knows."

Van Ryn entered the room beaming and unsuspicious. He went straight to Ned's mother, held out his hand, and in English said :

" How do you do, Mrs. Oakley ! Welcome to my house."

Then he turned to his fellow councillor, whom he had last addressed in the words—" Will you withdraw ? " —and amicably said : " It is the first time you have been in my house for many years, Mr. Oakley, but I hope it will not be the last."

" Thank you." They shook hands, and Van Ryn continued : " And you know I don't receive any

schelms in my home." This tactful apology filled Oakley with confidence, and he said: "It would be a pity if Ned or I were *schelms* in view of what's taking place."

As Van Ryn did not comprehend, he added:

"My boy has got something to say to you."

"What is it, Ned?" asked Van Ryn encouragingly. "You want to come back to the store again? . . . Your place is always open, you know, although you've been to the front. . . . Would you like to take over the whole control and management?"

"No, it's not that. . . ."

"Think it over, Oakley, don't be too quick to refuse; things are bad to-day, but if you came with me we could still beat the Jew. And if all goes well, I don't see why the partnership you lost . . ."

"One moment, Mr. Van Ryn. I wanted to tell you . . ."

Here Ned's father interposed. "The fact is my boy thinks . . ."

"Let Ned speak for himself, Dad!" Mrs. Oakley tugged at her husband's coat-tails.

"*Machtig*," exclaimed Van Ryn, "what is all this shyness about?" Suddenly he glanced at Anita, and something in her face forewarned him of the words that were about to fall bluntly from the boy's lips. "I want to ask you if Anita can become engaged to me?"

"What! Anita . . . ?"

"Yes, father." She came across and stood beside Ned, whose uniform contrasted vividly with the white dress she wore.

Van Ryn seemed unable to speak. He stood there limp and disconcerted; with many confused thoughts

passing through his mind ; his face showing confusion and displeasure, and of these Thomas Oakley saw naturally the latter only.

" Well," he growled, " what do you say about it ? "

Mrs. Oakley looked soft daggers at her husband, and Ned told him in an angry glance to be silent. Oakley's view was that a Dutchman should jump at the chance of marrying his daughter to an Englishman, and he was itching to say so.

Anita went gently to her father, who was thinking of Huysmans in the other room, and she said in High Dutch : " Are you not pleased that Ned and I love each other ? "

" You told me, Anita, that there was nothing of this kind between you two ; I had other ideas in regard to your future ; I hoped you would marry one of our own people."

" What are they saying ? " whispered Mrs. Oakley, who understood no Dutch.

" I suppose you think my boy's not good enough to marry your daughter," suddenly blurted the father.

" I never said that," replied Van Ryn.

" Well, what are you objecting to ? The young people are fond of each other, they're healthy and all that—we're agreeable, though, mind you, I didn't fancy Ned marrying an Afrikander girl at first either."

" Well, Mr. Oakley, since you are so straightforward, I can tell you that I would have preferred your son to be an Afrikander."

" You object to him because he's . . ."

" He didn't say anything of the kind, Dad ! "

Ned was bitterly regretting his father's presence, and showed it in the harshness of his tone.

"I heard him tell Anita that she must marry a Dutchman."

"He did not say that—your Dutch isn't very good, Dad—he said . . ."

"Oh, well, if my Dutch isn't good enough I refuse to listen to anything but English."

"You see, Oakley, how unreasonable he always is! Now, who could get on with a man like that? You think I want such a father-in-law for Anita?"

"Here," cried Oakley, "none of that! What are you saying. . . . Please translate that into English."

"Anything for peace," said the unhappy Ned, and he proceeded to translate, substituting for Van Ryn's blunt words—"You see how conservative your father is—I fear that he and Anita might not get on very well."

"He didn't say that," shouted Oakley; "he said I was pig-headed and he wouldn't have such a man for a father-in-law."

"Oh well, if you understood, Dad, why did you ask me to translate?"

"Because I refuse to understand the infernal gibberish any longer."

"Ha," shouted Van Ryn, "he has the cheek to ask me to let my daughter marry his son, and he talks like that about my language!"

Anita was now consoling Mrs. Oakley, whose distress was obvious, and Ned faced his father. "I'm sorry I asked you to have anything to do with this, Dad. I should have gone my own way, whether you liked it or not."

" Well, go your own way and be damned to you and your Dutch friends ! "

" No, Oakley, don't stop here," cried Van Ryn, " never will I let my daughter marry the son of a Jingo like that." He pointed his finger menacingly at the father, and the Englishman, in a fury, raised his fist and seemed to be on the verge of striking somebody or something. Mrs. Oakley sobbed aloud, Anita clung to her father, Ned gripped Oakley by the shoulders.

At this moment Maggie, her face depicting anguish and terror, rushed into the room and shouted :

" Fire, fire ! The house is burning ! "

Immediately the entire aspect of things altered. Oakley cried: " Go and look after your guests, Van Ryn. I'll get the stuff out of here. Anita, take Mrs. Oakley out. Where's the water laid on ? "

But as they were running from the room to fight the flames, Huysmans came in calmly, saying, " It's all right," and Maggie burst into loud laughter, in which she was joined by some of the guests outside.

" Maggie ! What's this ? " said Van Ryn sternly. Huysmans came forward.

" My little joke, Johannes. I asked Maggie to do that because she's a better actor than I am, and I wanted to show you how foolish you and Mr. Oakley were to go on quarrelling day after day."

By this time everybody in the room was in a hilarious condition, and Maggie received compliments right and left upon the success of her performance, especially from Mrs. Oakley, to whom she had gone to apologize.

" I'm sorry, Jan, that Mr. Oakley and I so forgot ourselves—I had no idea you could hear us outside," said Van Ryn.

Huysmans walked with him to the *stoep* door and there turned: "Will you excuse me if I take your father away for a few minutes, Anita. . . . ? I have something to say to him."

"Oh, well, we were just going," said Oakley.

"Please don't go for a minute."

Huysmans led Van Ryn out into the garden, and there they walked beneath the blossoms of the fruit trees.

"Johannes, what is your objection to the young man?"

"What . . . you know then, Jan?"

"Yes," he replied with sad resignation. "I knew the moment I saw him and her together a few minutes ago in the *voorkamer*, and I must always have known, because something told me not to speak to Anita."

"You don't intend to do as you promised me, then?"

"Nay, Jan . . . it would not be right. Anita loves this young man; give her to him."

"You tell me, Jan Huysmans, to give my daughter to an Englishman?"

"Yes, Johannes. And I tell you to do so not only because Anita will be happy, but because it is the best thing for our people."

"Jan! Can you say such a thing to me?"

Huysmans looked across the garden where Maggie and Hendrik Viljoen were walking alone in the half-violet light that already came from the sinking sun. Far out beyond the dorp, browsing on the stunted bushes, the sheep and cattle were lifting their heads and grazing towards home; farther north Huysmans saw the shapeless and sinister outlines of the location—

foul, mysterious and menacing; then his eyes caught the glint of the railway track, running from south to north like a silver thread, symbolic of the civilization that had been implanted at the southern end of the Dark Continent by the sturdy Dutch and from there carried on by the British; and then finally he turned to the east and fixed his gaze on the horizon where to-morrow the sun would shine for them all. Looking out across the little houses of the dorp, clinging together as if for safety and companionship, he said:

"Johannes, why do you not wish Anita to marry an Englishman?"

"Because his race and our race can never be friends. We have always hated each other, and always will! What good then can come of such a union? It would not have God's blessing."

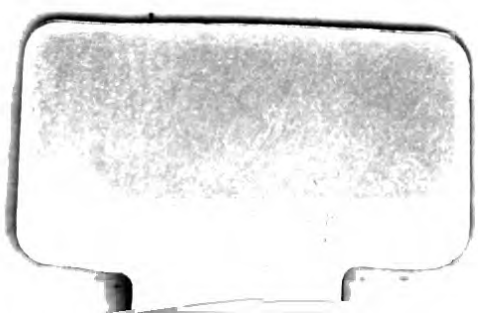
"You are wrong, old friend," replied Huysmans gently, "when you say an Afrikander should give his daughters only to Afrikanders. If we want a great United South Africa we must convert all our white population into Afrikanders. Who can do this better than our women? If our daughters marry only our own men they lose the opportunity of doing so. Do we preach to the converted? Oakley is a fine young man, Jan, we should be proud of him . . . and Anita's task will not be a difficult one, for she . . . loves him."

Huysmans faltered as he uttered the end of that phrase; and Van Ryn dimly discerning, for the first time in his life, something of the nobility and the sacredness of love, said:

"*Arme vriend!* Then you really desire me to let this be?"

"It was once my dearest wish that such a thing should never be, but God or Fate wills otherwise, and we must bow our heads to His decrees."

He linked his arm with Van Ryn's, and slowly they went back into the house.

THE END.

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